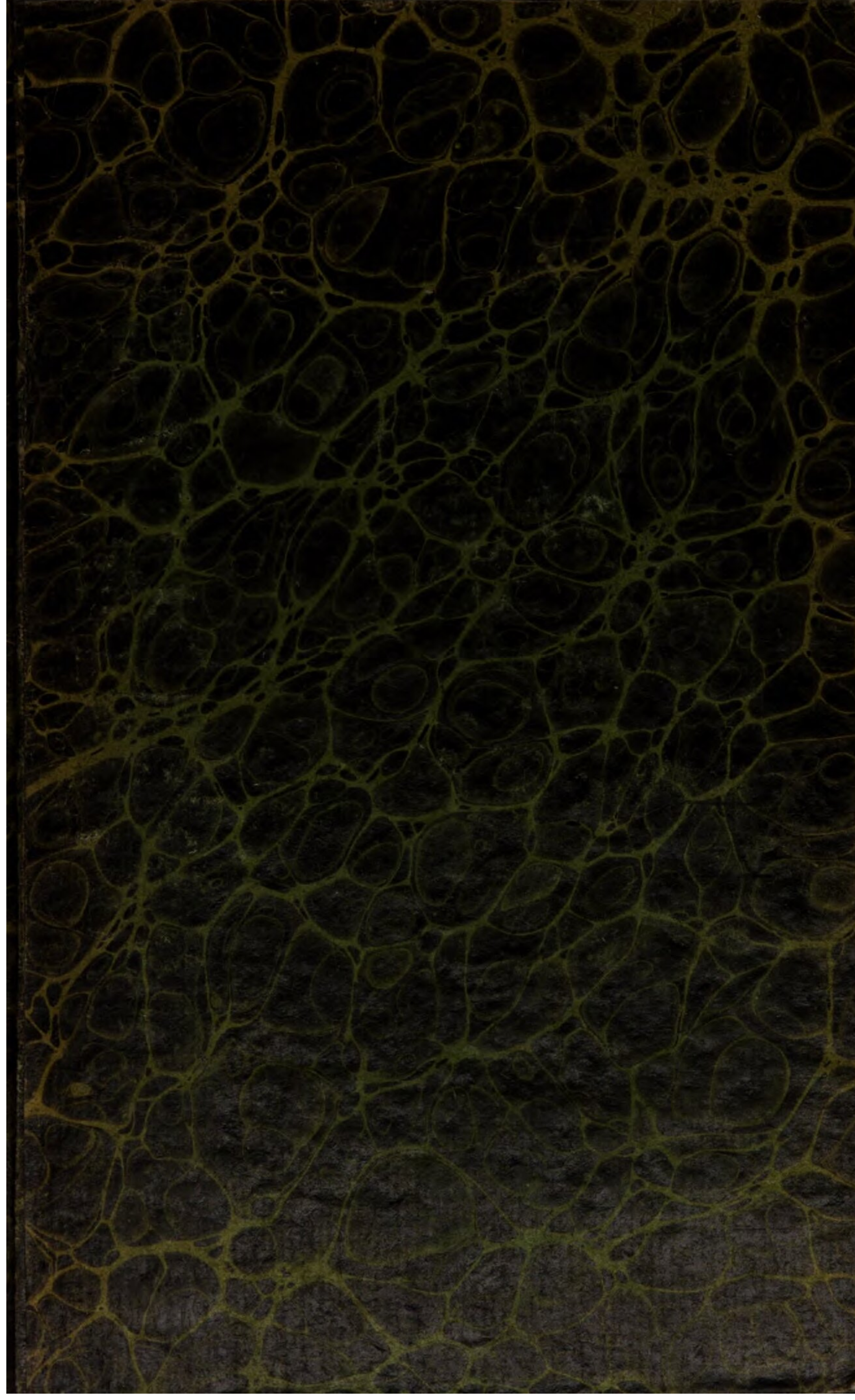




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SACRED HISTORY,

SELECTED FROM

THE SCRIPTURES;

WITH

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,

PARTICULARLY CALCULATED

TO FACILITATE THE STUDY

OF THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES

IN

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

SIXTH EDITION.

VOL. VI.

By MRS. TRIMMER.

LONDON:

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1810.

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WITH AN

APPENDIX

BY MRS. TRIMMER.



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SECTION I.

THE MALICE OF THE JEWS IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE
RAISING OF LAZARUS, AND THE DETERMINATION
OF THE SANHEDRIM TO PUT JESUS TO DEATH.

From John, Chap. xi.

THEN gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him; and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.

And one of them named Caiaphas, being the high-priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

And this spake he not of himself: but being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation:

And not for that nation only, but also that he should gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Then from that day forth, they took counsel together, for to put him to death.

Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence into a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.

And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many

went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.

Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?

Now both the chief priest and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that if any man knew where he was, he should shew it, that they might take him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The chief priests and Pharisees assembled the Sanhedrim, under pretence that the Romans would bring an army and destroy their nation, if a report should prevail that the promised MESSIAH was come. But there was no real danger that the Romans would be irritated against the Jewish nation on account of the Gospel, for it was no ways prejudicial to them, neither had they at that time any jealousy of the growing interest of CHRIST. Had the Jews kept their fidelity to God, they would have had no occasion to fear the greatest power on earth; but by their desertion and rebellion against their *true* King, they exposed themselves to the very evils they sought to avoid, as will appear in a future part of their history.

The Jewish state was in a very unsettled condition, so that the high priesthood, instead of descending in succession, and continuing for life, was frequently transferred from one person to another. *Caiaphas* being in the office at the time this matter was debating, it was suddenly suggested to him by *Divine inspiration*, that Jesus should die for the Jewish nation. Unconscious of the prophetic meaning of the words he uttered, *Caiaphas* reasoned on them according to the principles of human policy; inferring that the extreme danger of the state would

would justify the taking away the life even of an innocent person, for the security of the people. *Caiaphas*, as high priest of the Jews, should have acted from better motives: his crime in consenting to murder an innocent man by force of law, was a violation of truth, honour, and conscience. We must not suppose that his *malice* was suggested by the HOLY SPIRIT, though he spake *prophetically*; but he was inspired to utter those words, that the innocence of Jesus might appear in the strongest light; and the comment of the Evangelist implies, that he, who certainly knew the truth, considered our LORD's death as *a sacrifice of atonement* for the sins of all who should believe on him, wheresoever dispersed.

It is plain that the chief priests and rulers had no real piety, or they would have been otherwise employed, when the passover was so near, than in holding councils to put to death a person who they confessed performed many miracles, and against whom they could find no just cause of accusation. It is very remarkable, that notwithstanding their command for apprehending Jesus, he was not delivered up; nothing but a *Divine power* could have thus restrained the people: this circumstance affords further confirmation that he was the SON of GOD. Our LORD certainly could have defeated entirely the evil counsels of the Jewish Sanhedrim, but knowing that what they endeavoured to effect for the advancement of their own interest, would, though they knew it not, promote the gracious design of GOD for the salvation of mankind, he resolved to let them take their own wicked course: but as his ministry on earth was not yet fully completed, our LORD determined to avoid the immediate effects of their malice: therefore, instead of visiting Jerusalem, he went from Bethany to a little city called Ephraim, on the confines of the tribe

of Benjamin ; and afterwards, it is supposed, took a short journey to the banks of the river Jordan, from whence he before went to Bethany, for the purpose of raising Lazarus. Here, instead of preaching publicly, our LORD instructed his disciples in private conversations.

Those Jews, who were strict observers of the ceremonial law, being under particular circumstances, which, according to that law, required purification, chose to perform some preparatory sacrifices at Jerusalem, that they might be ready at the solemn feast of the passover. These were in general enemies to CHRIST, and probably looked for his going to Jerusalem, with the hope that he would be apprehended and condemned to death.

SECTION II.

JESUS ON HIS WAY TO JERUSALEM PROPHESES OF HIS SUFFERINGS, AND REPROVES THE AMBITION OF JAMES AND JOHN.

From Luke, Chap. xviii.—Matt. Chap. xx.

AND they were in the way going up to Jerusalem ; and Jesus went before them ; and they were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.

Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes : and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles ;

And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him : and the third day he shall raise again.

And

And they understood none of these things : and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.

And he said unto her, What wilt thou ? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.

But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with ? They say unto him, We are able.

And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with : but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.

And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great, exercise authority upon them.

But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At the time appointed by the FATHER, our LORD left his secret retreat, and resolved to go up to the passover: his readiness to go to Jerusalem astonished his disciples, for their hearts sunk within them from the apprehension of the evils that threatened him and themselves. In order that they might be prepared for his sufferings, JESUS took them into a private Place, and informed them of many particulars concerning the circumstances which would befall him at the passover: what he now spake was so contrary to the notions they had of the MESSIAH and his kingdom, and such a disappointment to their expectations from their Master, that they were quite confounded. Our LORD did not think proper to enlighten their minds any farther at this time; the intent of his uttering these prophecies seems to have been, that the accomplishment of them might be some confirmation of their faith, and encourage them to expect his resurrection from the dead, during a series of events which he knew would severely try them.

Notwithstanding the apostles could not comprehend the whole of our LORD's predictions, as they were unwilling to take them in a literal sense, they had so much faith in him, as to believe that he would *finally* overcome all difficulties, and reign in a glorious manner; but still they expected a temporal kingdom. John and James in particular, who appear to have been admitted to the greatest degree of intimacy with their Divine Master, were desirous of obtaining places of the highest dignity in this kingdom. It is likely that they employed their mother to make the request, that if it should be displeasing to our LORD they might not incur his anger; which

which was a very mean action, and they surely must have forgot that Jesus knew all hearts. To convince them that the ambition which they secretly harboured in their bosoms was open to his view, instead of answering their mother, our LORD addressed himself to James and John, and put a question which led them to reflect on the sufferings they were to endure for his sake, By the *cup* which he drank of, our LORD meant afflictions; and by the *baptism*, overwhelming calamities. They readily answered, that they *could* endure whatever should befall them, not considering their own natural weakness; and our LORD, knowing the aid they were to receive from the HOLY SPIRIT, assured them they *would* be able to follow him in sufferings: but he informed them that it did not belong to him, as the MESSIAH, to confer honour and rank by partial friendship: for exaltation and happiness in the other world would be dispensed according to the original appointment of GOD the FATHER, in proportion to the degrees of piety and holiness each person should attain to here.

This desire of pre-eminence naturally awakened the jealousy of the other disciples against James and John; to prevent the ill consequences of it, our LORD called them all to him, and informed them, that his kingdom was of a very different nature from the kingdoms of this world: for, instead of appointing any of them as chief to govern the rest, they were to regard each other as brethren, and be ready to perform the lowest offices, not only for their own little fraternity, but for any whose spiritual interest and benefit they could promote by their humility.

Our LORD then proposed his own example as a pattern for their imitation. He came, not to exercise dominion, but to *labour*, and even *die*, for the good of others;

others; and to give his own life as a ransom for many, who had forfeited theirs to Divine justice.

From our LORD's answer to James and John we should learn to consider, whether what we desire for ourselves, in respect to temporal blessings, be proper for us; and, if we cannot obtain them, we should rest satisfied with the denial; since we may be certain, that wisdom and love, and not unkindness, produce it. We should often ask ourselves, whether we are willing to bear our share of sufferings in this world; for if we do not desire to do so, as far as GOD shall appoint, we are not worthy to be called the disciples of CHRIST. But if with true resignation and humility we are ready to endure all evils, and to do all we can for the welfare and salvation of others, we may rest assured, that, however we suffer here, we shall inherit glory and happiness in a future state.

SECTION III.

JESUS GIVETH SIGHT TO A BLIND MAN, AND CONVERTETH ZACCHEUS THE PUBLICAN.

From Mark, Chap. x.—Luke, Chap. xix.

AND they came to Jericho; and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples, and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the highway-side, begging.

And when we heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.

And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me.

And

And JESUS stood still, and commanded him to be called: and they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, arise; he calleth thee. And he, casting away his garment, rose, and came to JESUS.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, LORD, that I might receive my sight.

And JESUS said unto him, Go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying GOD: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto GOD.

And JESUS entered and passed through Jericho.

And behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

And he sought to see JESUS who he was, and could not for the press, because he was little of stature,

And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; for he was to pass that way.

And when JESUS came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house.

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.

And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the LORD, Behold, LORD, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold.

And JESUS said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for so much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As our LORD was pursuing his journey towards Jerusalem, an occasion offered for a remarkable display of his miraculous power. The Evangelist *Mark*, from whose Gospel the Scripture for this section is selected, mentions only *one* blind man; and Luke's account accords with his, but Matthew mentions two. The reason of this variation might possibly have been, that Bartimeus was well known, the other not. But it is not worth while to spend time in reconciling such trifling contradictions as these, since it is evident, that if JESUS could cure *one*, he certainly could cure *two*; and the giving sight to *one* who was blind, incontestably proved him to be the SON of DAVID, prophesied of by *Isaiah*.

Our LORD probably suffered Bartimeus to repeat his petition for mercy, in order to exercise his faith, and make the miracle more conspicuous.

The news of this extraordinary affair drew vast multitudes together. Jesus, knowing the good disposition of *Zaccheus*, and that he would gladly receive the Gospel, vouchsafed to visit him, and met with a joyful welcome. The Pharisees, as usual, were much offended with our LORD, that he should shew favour to a publican; but *Zaccheus*, to vindicate himself in some degree, and shew that he was not so deficient in moral duties as they supposed him to be, stood forth before them all, and assured our LORD, that he had conscientiously endeavoured to regulate his conduct by the rules of charity and justice. Jesus, knowing that he had in reality acted upon upright principles, gave him the promise of salvation, because he had shewn himself a true son of Abraham,

both

both *by integrity* and *faith*; and, to silence the murmurings of the Pharisees, our LORD declared, that the great design of his appearing upon earth was, to recover those who, like Zaccheus in his unconverted state, were wandering in doubt and uncertainty, desirous of knowing the truth.

It is related of Zaccheus that he was *rich*; his conversion, therefore, proves, that it is not the *possession* of wealth, but the *inordinate love* of it, which makes it *harder for a rich man to enter into heaven, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*.

Though our LORD was a perfect stranger to Zaccheus, this upright publican was not so to him; for the good Shepherd knows all his sheep (by which are meant, those who *will* obey his voice), and is able to call them by their names; and declared, that He would lay down his life for them, which he actually has done.

SECTION IV.

THE PARABLE OF TEN POUNDS.

From Luke, Chap. xix.

AND as they heard these things, Jesus added, and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.

And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.

And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant : because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.

And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.

And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin.

For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man : thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.

And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knowest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow.

Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury ?

And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.

(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)

For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given ; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.

But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

And

And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD knowing that the declaring himself to be the MESSIAH had raised an expectation in the minds of his followers, that he would shortly resume the kingdom of Israel, deliver his people from the Roman yoke, and bring the heathen nations into subjection, spake a parable to correct their mistakes and warn them of the danger they would incur by rejecting him, when they should find their views disappointed. In this parable our LORD compares himself to a Nobleman—Heaven to a distant country—and the Church, or government of the MESSIAH upon earth, to a kingdom of which he was at his return to take possession. The citizens of this kingdom were the Jews who rejected him, and the ten pounds were different endowments bestowed upon those who professed themselves his followers; such as wisdom, riches, power, &c. The design of this parable was to shew, that though CHRIST would not come agreeably to their expectations as a temporal Prince, he would appear as an heavenly king, and that all persons would be finally called to give an account to him how they had employed the gifts intrusted to them; that they should be rewarded in proportion to their respective improvements; that those who were *slothful* should be severely punished, and such as rejected his authority, destroyed.

The instruction contained in this section concerns all Christians; let us, therefore, apply it to our own hearts, and seriously consider what abilities we have, and resolve to employ them to the best advantage, for the
honour

honour of GOD, and the real good of ourselves and fellow-creatures. The more *diligent* we are, the greater degree of happiness we shall certainly attain, for we have a kind and liberal Master. It is not enough to be able to say we have done no harm in the world, for every one must strive to do some good: and there are few, indeed, who can plead want of opportunity. If GOD were *austere*, as the slothful servant represented his LORD, even then he might justly expect us to use our best endeavours, that he might reap where he *has* sown. But GOD, so far from requiring of us harder services than we can perform, has promised to assist us in the discharge of our duty by his *heavenly grace*.

Even at the present time, there are numbers who reject our SAVIOUR and his doctrine; these, if they do not repent, will be included in punishment with the unbelieving Jews: for he is a SAVIOUR to those only who *believe in his name, and obey his precepts*.

What is to be understood by *Unto every one that hath shall be given, &c.* has been explained in a former section.

SECTION V.

JESUS ENTERTAINED AT BETHANY, AND ANOINTED
BY MARY.

*From John, Chap. xii.—Matt. Chap. xxvi.—Mark,
Chap. xiv.*

THEN JESUS, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

Now when JESUS was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

There

There they made him a supper, and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard very costly, and she brake the box, and poured it on his head,

And anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

And Jesus said, Let her alone, why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good: but me ye have not always.

She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burial.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her.

Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.

But the chief priests consulted, that they might put Lazarus also to death,

Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Jesus was so shortly to suffer, he resolved first to make a farewell visit to his friends at Bethany, where he met with a welcome reception, and seems to have been generally esteemed in the neighbourhood. Simon the leper, who, it is likely, had been cured by CHRIST, to testify his gratitude made a feast. Martha, whose veneration for her honoured LORD was very great, resolved to shew it publicly ; therefore, instead of sitting down at table with the rest of the guests, she humbly waited on him. The greatest honour Lazarus could pay to his Divine friend was, to give proof that he was restored to life, by eating with the company, and exposing himself to the examination of any who should require satisfaction respecting the miracle. Mary, whose heart glowed with the warmest gratitude, resolved also to give some open testimony of it ; for this purpose, instead of adorning her own person for the festive entertainment, she came with her tresses flowing in a negligent manner, and a box of costly ointment in her hand ; thus approaching his honoured person she poured it on his head with the utmost respect ; then kneeling down, she anointed his feet, wiping them, in token of humility and veneration, with her hair. Perhaps she broke the box, that it might never be applied to any other use *. The expence of this ointment amounted to about nine pounds seven shillings and six-pence of our money. The fragrant perfume of it diffusing itself through the house, called the attention of every one to consider the respect due to so honourable a guest, but it had not a proper effect on all.

* If the box was made of what we call alabaster, it might easily be broken : but commentators in general suppose that she merely emptied it, and that the word *brake* relates to the contents of it.

When our LORD observed the secret murmurings of some of his disciples at this action of Mary's, he spared her gentleness the pain of justifying it; and knowing the design of Judas to set off with the bag, he disdained to give him a particular reply; but addressing himself to those who were displeased from better motives, he desired they would not give this amiable woman any uneasiness on the subject; reminding them, that they would never want objects for their *charity*, but he should soon be out of the reach of their kindness; for his death was so near, that Mary (though, as we may suppose unconscious of it) had in a manner embalmed him for his burial; since that would happen before the smell of the perfume would leave his body. And as her behaviour in this instance certainly proceeded from the best motives, he should receive it as an act of piety and love, neither should the remembrance of it ever be lost.

How astonishing does the fortitude of our blessed LORD appear! Though he knew he was so soon to suffer a painful and ignominious death, his mind was perfectly serene; he did not retire to solitude, nor pass the few remaining days of his life in lamentations with his friends, on the necessity of his submitting to it, but joined with cheerfulness the social entertainment, and talked of his death with as much composure as if he had been only going a short journey. The secret source of his serenity was an inward assurance through the HOLY SPIRIT that his thoughts and actions were perfectly conformable to the will of GOD, and conducive to the happiness of mankind, and that THE FATHER would support him in every conflict.

It is impossible for any man who believes in a future state, entirely to divest himself of the fear of death, by the strength of *human reason* alone; but this fear will decrease

decrease in proportion to our consciousness of rectitude of conduct, and our confidence in divine mercy; and though our SAVIOUR's example will ever remain superior in this instance, as well as in every other, to that of the best of men, every Christian who strives to imitate it will *occasionally* be comforted also with an inward assurance of future happiness.

There was great generosity in Mary's action, for the sum she expended on the ointment was much more than was usual for persons in her rank of life to apply to such a purpose. To be thus anointed was an honour fit for a prince, and it shews that Mary entertained the highest opinion of the dignity of our LORD's character. Though on this occasion our LORD accepted and commended Mary's liberality, in preference to her bestowing it in alms, we have reason to believe every act of real charity to the poor will *now* be received by him as if done to himself.

How detestable was the hypocrisy of Judas! There are still in the world persons of the same horrid principles, who make a pretended regard for the poor a cloak for an opportunity of enriching themselves with their spoils; but let us hope that there are not many such.

It is needless to remark on the malice of the Jewish rulers, for it must appear in its proper light.

SECTION VI.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ZECHARIAH RELATING
TO THE MESSIAH.

From Chap. ix.

I. REJOICE greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee:

thee : he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

II. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We read in the *Old Testament*, that judges, prophets, and great men, usually rode upon asses or mules. King David himself made use of a mule; and king Solomon, at his accession to the throne, was mounted on the very beast his father commonly rode. This custom was adopted in consequence of an express command given by the LORD, that the kings and people of Israel should not multiply horses to themselves: the reason of which was, that they should rely on His almighty power in the day of battle, and not on the natural strength and force of their armies. When Solomon was settled on the throne, he married the daughter of the king of Egypt, and opened a commerce with that country. Shortly after we read, that he had four thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; but instead of strengthening, Solomon weakened himself by this means, for he was not able, with his increased force, to repel the Edomites, and the king of Damascus, who annoyed his subjects at the latter end of his reign.

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was still more unfortunate; for a division of the kingdom took place in his reign,

reign, and the forces of Israel, divided into two parts, were employed in weakening and destroying each other. The new king of Egypt took advantage of these disturbances, besieged Jerusalem, and carried away all the treasures of the temple, and of the royal palace, which had long been collecting by David and Solomon, particularly the golden shields; and Rehoboam became a servant or tributary, to the king of Egypt. From this time we may date the ruin of Israel: the two kingdoms were so weakened by their internal wars, that they were unable to defend themselves against their neighbours, and became servants by turns to the kings of Assyria and Babylon; till, after many and great distresses, they were carried into captivity; the people of Israel into Assyria, and those of Judah into Babylon.

During this period we find, that God had not utterly forsaken his people, but oftentimes gave them very signal deliverances; but it is to be observed, that their deliverances were not effected by their armed forces, but by the miraculous interposition of God, when their condition was such that they had lost all hope of defence from their own strength, and were willing to rely solely on Divine aid. The history of Hezekiah, and the successes of the Maccabees, in particular, confirm these remarks.

By this short account it appears, that David was the last of the rulers over Israel who observed the law against multiplying horses; not that this was the only crime the kings and people of Israel were chargeable with, for they had others of a deeper die; but this was certainly reckoned amongst their offences against God, as we may learn from their own prophets.

We find then, that the *martial preparations* made by former

former princes had helped to ruin the nation. God had repeatedly taught the people to expect a king of David's race to come and *save* them; and that they might not look for one like those who had undone them, he particularly described him as resembling those under whom their country had been delivered; kings who feared God, and therefore feared *no enemy*; who, though mounted on asses, and colts, the foals of asses, had been enabled to put to flight thousands and tens of thousands, that came together against them.

The king foretold by the prophets was moreover to be *just, meek, and lowly*: but how could he have deserved this character, had he appeared in the pomp and pride of war, surrounded by horses and chariots, in direct opposition to the law of God? Or, as he was to bring *salvation* to the people, could he make use of those means which God had never prospered, and which he had sufficiently declared he never would prosper?

We see then, that it was essential that the MESSIAH should come *riding on a colt, the foal of an ass*; and from the prophet's words, "I will cut off the chariot, &c." we may understand, that this humble action was to be opposed to the pride of their warlike kings.

The passage which has the second place in this section, helps to illustrate this construction*. Let us now see in what manner this prediction was fulfilled.

SECTION VII.

JESUS MAKES A TRIUMPHANT ENTRY INTO
JERUSALEM.

From Matt. Chap. xxi.—Mark, xi.—Luke, xix. John xii.

AND when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were

* The annotations to this section are chiefly extracted from Bishop Sherlock's Dissertations on our LORD's Entry into Jerusalem.

come

come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,

Saying unto them; Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and with her a colt whereon man never sat: lose them, and bring them unto me.

And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.

And they went their way, and found the colt tied by the door without, in a place where two ways met: and they loose him.

And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

And they said, the Lord hath need of him.

And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they sat Jesus thereon.

The people therefore that were with him, when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. And many spread their garments in the way: and others cut down branches off the trees, and strewed them in the way.

And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

And much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

Took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples

ciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen

Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the LORD; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,

Tell ye the daughters of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.

These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when JESUS was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

And some of the pharisees from among the multitude, said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you, that if these would hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Every circumstance evinces, that our SAVIOUR perfectly understood the import of all the ordinances of the Jewish religion. Whatever was there *typified* he *realized*. As the Lamb was set apart for the passover on the tenth day of the month, five days before the feast, on that very day CHRIST chose to shew himself publicly as the MESSIAH; and to do honour to THE FATHER, he entered Jerusalem in a triumphant manner: but as he sought not an earthly kingdom, he was not attended with the usual ensigns of royal accession appropriated by the kings of those days. No heralds at arms proclaimed his
title

title to the crown of Judea ; no trumpets sounded before him ; he did not ascend a stately chariot attired in robes glittering with gold and gems, but arrayed in a mean habit, he humbly rode on an ass's colt. Our LORD knew where to direct his disciples to seek one, which the owner would be willing to lend for his use. How must it have strengthened their faith, to find every particular agree with his prediction ! When they had brought the colt and its dam to their Master, and found that he intended to ride the foal, having no saddle, they pulled off their own upper garments to supply the want of one, upon which he seated himself.

It was our LORD's constant practice to take his journeys on foot ; this is the only instance recorded in sacred writ of his going otherwise ; and it is very remarkable that he should choose a beast "whereon never man rode," as it requires both skill and courage to manage such an one. But skill and courage were unnecessary to Jesus, for his divine power could restrain all creatures, and make them subservient to his will.

The miracle which our LORD wrought in raising Lazarus from the dead had left a strong impression on the minds of numbers who were eye-witnesses of it ; they boldly averred it, and declared themselves ready to *bear record, or depose the truth of it upon oath* ; this influenced many more, so that a great multitude followed him, carrying branches of palm-trees, as was usual on public triumphs ; and others came forth from the city to meet him, notwithstanding the command of the Sanhedrim to apprehend him. Fully convinced that Jesus was the promised MESSIAH, these people resolved to shew him all possible respect ; and, as their acclamations tended to promote the honour of God, by bearing testimony to the faithfulness of the divine promises, our LORD readily accepted

accepted them ; and, to shew that he was not dejected at the thoughts of his approaching sufferings, he advanced cheerfully towards Jerusalem, whilst the people who attended him expressed in loud acclamations their joyful hopes, that their long expected MESSIAH would assume his throne, and deliver them from the oppression of the Romans. The meaning of the word *Hosanna* is, *Save, we beseech thee.*

The Pharisees seem to have made it a rule, that some of them should attend all our LORD's public motions : those who were with him at the time he was thus honoured, expressed their surprise that he, who pretended to have so much humility, should give encouragement to such seditious proceedings, and hazard the consequences of them. On this occasion our LORD laid aside all reserve, and informed them, that as it was absolutely necessary for the fulfilment of the prophecies that the MESSIAH should enter *Jerusalem* in this manner, if those who were eye-witnesses of it should remain silent, God would sooner animate the stones to bear evidence to the completion of them, than suffer a triumph so evidently marked out by the prophets to remain without testimony.

This open declaration of our LORD increased the envy and rage of the Pharisees, who began to fear that all the endeavours of the Sanhedrim to destroy him would prove ineffectual, since his popularity so greatly encreased.

The disciples did not at this time understand the meaning of our LORD's actions. It is likely, that, being illiterate men, they had never studied the prophetic writings ; but our SAVIOUR's frequent references to them were brought to their recollection when they received the HOLY GHOST after his death ; and then they perceived their correspondence with the wonderful events of his life.

SECTION VIII.

JESUS WEEPS OVER JERUSALEM.—CURSES THE BARREN
FIG-TREE.

From Luke, Chap. xix.—Matt. xxi.

AND when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side.

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another : because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this ?

And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple : and when he had looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, he went out unto Bethany with the twelve.

And on the morrow when they were come from Bethany he was hungry.

And seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon : and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves ; for the time of figs was not yet.

And Jesus said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How tender and compassionate was our LORD's prophetic

phetic lamentation over Jerusalem! The prospect of the miseries to which its wretched inhabitants would, through their own obstinacy, be consigned by divine vengeance, melted him into tears. It might rather have been expected that the sight of that city, in which he was to endure such sufferings, would have provoked him to express indignation against it: but our merciful REDEEMER seems to have forgot all his own wrongs, great and cruel as they were, and to have felt only for his enemies!

The commotions which were occasioned by the public entry of JESUS into Jerusalem, rendered it impracticable for any to lay hold of him; and he entered the temple *publicly* as the MESSIAH, and shewed that he had no fear of his persecutors: but the day being far advanced, our LORD soon retired from thence, reserving to a future time the reformation of those disorders which he now only remarked in silence. It is likely that our LORD dismissed the multitude, and would not remain all night in the city, that he might not be suspected of a design to head a faction. So intent was he on fulfilling his mission, that he left Bethany very early in the morning, without waiting for food; but, finding himself hungry, he resolved to take occasion from this circumstance to give a striking and important lesson to his disciples; therefore observing a fig-tree at some distance from the road, he desired them to go with him, that he might gather some fruit for his refreshment; for, as the time of gathering was not over, and it was full of leaves, there was reason for them to expect to find plenty of figs; but, behold, it bore none: on which he condemned it to perpetual barrenness. We cannot suppose that our LORD was ignorant of the condition of this tree, but his disciples certainly were: his *cursing* it therefore was only meant to intimate, that the curse of God would wither and destroy

My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

And would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple.

And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.

And the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him: for they feared him, because all the people were astonished at his doctrine.

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them.

And when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: they were sore displeased,

And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea: have ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany, and he lodged there.

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, What signs shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?

But he spake of the temple of his body.

When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD appears to have had in view the completion of the following prediction of the prophet Malachi.

The LORD whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple: even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap.

And he shall sit as a refiner, and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.

This prediction CHRIST partly fulfilled the day before, by his sudden and unexpected entrance into the Temple as THE MESSIAH. Though our LORD came to abolish the *Mosaic* dispensation, it was highly proper that he should vindicate the honour of his FATHER, by forbidding any profanation of that temple which was to be dedicated to his service whilst it remained. It was also agreeable to our LORD's character, as REDEEMER of the world, to see that justice was done to the Gentile proselytes who were admitted to worship there. These had a court peculiarly appropriated to them, which those who sold doves for sacrifices, and exchanged foreign money into current coin, had taken possession of, to the great disturbance of the worshippers. As this practice was directly opposite to the law of Moses, the traders could not justify it; neither could the Jews pretend to reprove CHRIST for driving them out. The temple at Jerusalem was designed, from its original institution, as a *house of prayer* for people of *all nations* who would become true worshippers of GOD: it was therefore insufferable in the Jews to make it
a den

a den of thieves, as they really did, for they practised great impositions in their different trades.

The Scribes and Pharisees were greatly alarmed at our LORD's proceedings; for, being conscious that they also were guilty of profanation, by abusing their power, and that they committed a variety of extortions, they naturally expected that he would attack them, and resolved more than ever to put him to death: but this was impossible for them to effect; and, though they thought themselves intimidated by the *people only*, they were overawed by *divine power*, for our LORD's hour of suffering was not yet come.

As JESUS, on this occasion, appeared to act in a manner inconsistent with his usual *meekness*, his disciples would have been at a loss to guess the motives of his conduct, had they not recollected a verse in the lxxixth psalm, which was applicable to him.

For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me.

From this scripture they inferred, that JESUS, like David, was actuated by zeal for the honour of God's house, and that he took this method of vindicating it.

When our LORD had driven the buyers and sellers out of the Temple, he invited the blind and the lame into it: his healing them was a real answer to the question which was asked when he entered Jerusalem, *Who is this?* his *works* testified of him more than the Hosannas.

The Jews accustomed their children at an early age to carry boughs of palm-trees at the feast of tabernacles; and, it is likely, they had done the same in the procession which attended our LORD's triumphant entry into Jerusalem: therefore, when they saw him return, they followed him, again repeating their Hosannas. This gave great offence to the chief priests, &c.; but JESUS justified himself for permitting the children thus to

honour him, by quoting a text from the viiith psalm; thus intimating, that it was not displeasing to God the FATHER to receive praises even from *little children*, and that the SON of God might with great propriety accept them.

As the Scribes and Pharisees could make no reasonable objection to the cleansing of the temple, they questioned our LORD's authority, and required a *sign* to prove that he had a divine mission. The very act itself proved *that God was with him*, for nothing less than the PRESENCE of the LORD could have enabled his single arm to drive out such numbers. He would not work another miracle at the requisition of his professed enemies, but gave them an obscure prophecy. They took his words in a *literal* sense, and cavilled at them, though there was the greatest reason to believe that he, who had performed so many wonderful miracles, could have caused the temple to rise again from its ruins, had it been necessary for the glory of God. But the prophecy had another meaning, and the evangelist has explained it, that Christians might not mistake it also. The temple at Jerusalem was but a type of CHRIST's *body*; both were prepared of God for the habitation of the EVERLASTING WORD; both were designed as means of intercourse between God and his people. It is supposed, that our LORD either pointed to his body, or laid his hand on it, when he spake the prophecy.

Since our LORD took such pains to cleanse the temple, we should be very careful not to *profane* any place appropriated to public worship by improper behaviour in it. When we enter a church, we should leave all *worldly cares* behind us, and give up our minds entirely to the service of God; for *wilfully* employing our thoughts upon worldly business in God's house is a crime of the *same nature* as carrying our goods thither to sell.

As our LORD encouraged children's Hosannas, and intimated that their praises are acceptable to his FATHER, and even conducive to *perfecting* the Divine glory, parents should make it their earnest endeavour to "impress devotional feelings as early as possible on the infant mind; they cannot be impressed too soon; and a child, to feel the full force of the idea of GOD, ought never to remember the time when he had no such idea *." It is true that children, till they are capable of reasoning, can offer up only *lip* service, as dictated by the parents; yet even that, in their years of innocence, tends to the glory of GOD, and naturally leads to the *worship of the heart*; especially, if they have the advantage of observing an example of piety in their instructors.

SECTION X.

THE DISCOURSE OF JESUS ON VIEWING THE WITHERED FIG-TREE.

From Mark, Chap. xi.

AND in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots.

And Peter calling it to remembrance, saith unto JESUS, Master, behold, the fig-tree which thou cursedst is withered away.

And JESUS answering, saith unto them, Have faith in GOD.

For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall

* Preface to Mrs. Barbauld's Hymns in prose for children.

believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith.

Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

And when ye stand, praying, forgive if ye have aught against any; that your Father which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD having, as we read in the last section, silenced his enemies, left them, and withdrew to Bethany, where he could be more retired, and have leisure for his devotions; but as his work lay at Jerusalem, thither he went again the next morning. When his disciples observed the fig-tree withered to the roots, they were struck with amazement; but our LORD told them, that if they continued faithful, they should be enabled to perform greater works than this; and should be endued with a miraculous power, on condition that they prayed for Divine assistance, and were in charity with all men.

The withering of the fig-tree afforded a proper emblem of the hypocrisy of the Jewish teachers; they professed great sanctity, but were destitute of real piety. When our LORD came amongst them, he earnestly wished to find some truth and sincerity amongst them, but they had none; therefore he denounced a heavy doom against them, and a short time after his death their place and nation were brought to destruction.

SECTION XI.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH*.

From Chap. liii, lvi.

I. WHO hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of JEHOVAH been manifested?

For he groweth up in their sight like a tender sucker, and like a root from a thirsty soil: he hath no form, nor any beauty, that we should regard him: nor is his countenance such that we should desire him.

Despised nor accounted in the number of men: a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; as one that hideth his face from us: he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

II. Go and say then to this people: Hear ye indeed, and understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Make gross the heart of this people; make their ears dull, and close up their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The first of these predictions implied, that notwithstanding the strong proofs which the MESSIAH would give that he was possessed of Divine power, the people would not perceive the ARM of the LORD working miracles through him. It has been repeatedly explained in the course of this history, what is meant by God's hardening the hearts and blinding the understanding of obstinate sinners; therefore, we need not repeat, that it

* Bishop Lowth's translation.

is a just judgment of God to withdraw his grace when it is despised and rejected.

Isaiah had such clear revelations of God's design of communicating his Divine nature to one of David's race, that he may very properly be said to have seen the glory of CHRIST, as well as to have spoken of him.

SECTION XII.

SOME GREEKS MAKE ENQUIRIES CONCERNING JESUS

—A VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

From John, Chap. xii.

AND there were certain Greeks among them, that came up to worship at the feast :

The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see JESUS.

Philip cometh and telleth Andrew : and again, Andrew and Philip tell JESUS.

And JESUS answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.

Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone : but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

He that loveth his life, shall lose it : and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal.

If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be : if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say ? Father save me from this hour : but for this cause came I unto this hour.

Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from

from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

The people therefore that stood by, and heard it, said, That it thundered; others said, An angel spake to him.

JESUS answered and said, This voice was not because of me, but for your sakes.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

(This he said, signifying what death he should die.)

The people answered him, We have heard out of the law, that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, the Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?

Then JESUS said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness, knoweth not whither he goeth.

While ye have light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

JESUS cried, and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.

And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me.

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness.

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words; hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father
which

which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak.

And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

These things spake Jesus and departed, and did hide himself from them.

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, LORD, who hath believed our report; and to whom hath the arm of the LORD been revealed?

Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias had said again,

He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see him with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him.

Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many believed on him: but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.

For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God *.

* Though it does not appear from the Evangelist, that our SAVIOUR's discourse, contained in the latter part of the xiith chap. of St. John, was a continuation of that related in the former part of the chapter, they agree so well together, that I thought the transposition allowable, as I could not properly introduce it in the next section.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Greeks who desired to see our LORD, are supposed to have been some of those Gentile converts who were called Proselytes of the Gate; persons who, having renounced idolatry, and being worshippers of the God of Israel, might, according to the law of Moses, be permitted to dwell in Judea, and to converse amongst the Jews. These, to shew their reverence for God came up to worship at the feast; though not having been circumcised, they were not allowed to eat the passover. Perhaps this instance of their respect for Jesus was in consequence of his having cleansed the court of the Gentiles from profanation. From their application to Philip in particular, it is likely that they lived near him in Bethsaida, and were personally acquainted with him. This Apostle was at first dubious, whether to comply or not with their request, as our LORD had declared, that he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; but when he had consulted with Andrew, they resolved to acquaint their LORD with it, who graciously permitted the Greeks to be conducted to him; and as they approached, informed his disciples that the time was at hand, when he should be glorified by the accession of the Gentiles to his church; but our LORD intimated that it was necessary his death should first happen. For as in respect to vegetation, a single grain of wheat would remain alone, and could not produce an increase if not sown in the earth; so had his FATHER ordained, that his death should prove the means of propagating the Gospel. Therefore, though it would appear to put an end to his kingdom, it would, on the contrary, bring it to perfection.

Our LORD then informed his Gentile followers of the

the difficulties they must prepare themselves to encounter, if they became his disciples, and encouraged them with promises of eternal rewards. We are not told how they determined, but may imagine that they were converted, as they came with minds so properly disposed to receive the Gospel.

Our LORD's answer to his Disciples when they informed him of the desire which these Greeks had to see him, plainly shews that he had a conflict in his mind; when the time was at hand for his being betrayed, he was tempted to wish he might avoid the dreadful sufferings which he knew would be inflicted upon him; but he resolved to follow the dictates of the HOLY SPIRIT, which suggested, that he came into the world on purpose to suffer, that GOD through him might be glorified in the salvation of mankind, and he accordingly resigned himself to endure all that was required of him, for the accomplishment of this great end; on which he received a public testimony, that his Sacrifice of himself would be accepted, which our LORD taught his followers to consider as given for their sakes, as a confirmation of their faith in respect to redemption through his death, and an example to his disciples to submit to the trials and persecutions they would meet with in the course of their ministry, on the like principle of constant regard to the *glory of GOD*. In respect to himself, our LORD was so perfectly convinced of THE FATHER's love for him, and he had such a constant communication with HIM, that he did not stand in need of this proof.

Our LORD then proceeded to explain what was meant by GOD's promise, that "*he would glorify his name,*" viz. that this should be effected by the destruction of Satan's power and the triumph of the MESSIAH's kingdom: and our LORD prophesied, that his crucifixion should

prove a mean of his exaltation; and that, in process of time all nations should be converted to his doctrine. This agreed with Daniel's prediction, that, all people, nations, and languages, should serve the MESSIAH; and also with those of David, who had foretold that he should be a Priest for ever, and a King for ever; that he should have length of days for ever, and his years as many generations. Isaiah declared that of the increase of his government there should be no end. Daniel likewise predicted, that the kingdom of the MESSIAH should break in pieces all other kingdoms; that his dominion should not pass away, and his kingdom not be destroyed.

Some of the people who heard our LORD talk of being *lifted up*, which was understood by them to mean being put to death, could not reconcile this with the conceptions they had formed of the MESSIAH from the above predictions: for they did not recollect, that the circumstance of his death was also foretold. Daniel predicted, that MESSIAH *should be cut off, but not for himself*; Isaiah, that *he should pour out his soul unto death*; and the royal Psalmist, *that his hands and feet should be pierced*. Our SAVIOUR did not think proper to point out these latter prophecies at present, but left them to be applied by the Apostles afterwards; and admonished his disciples to embrace the present opportunity of knowing the truth, instead of spending time in raising objections to what he asserted. He then, or shortly after, informed them of his union with the FATHER; assuring them, that he was the *visible image of God*, who revealed himself to the world through the MESSIAH. That he was expressly sent to teach them Divine truths, which by *human reason* alone they could never have discovered; that he was not come to condemn the world, but to offer salvation to it; which if they rejected, they would be judged

judged for it at the last day; and the words which he now spake would be sufficient evidence to justify their condemnation, as it was entirely the effect of their own obstinacy, in refusing Divine grace when it was offered to them. To enforce their belief, our LORD assured them, that he did not address them as a *common teacher*, but professed to speak the *very words of God*; and that his own mind was perfectly convinced, those words had a reference to the everlasting state of mankind, and were designed to promote their eternal life and happiness.

We may suppose that our LORD withdrew himself to avoid the rage of his persecutors, and to shew his displeasure against those who disregarded him.

The disbelief of the people verified Isaiah's prophecy*.

It is shocking to read, that men of learning, as the members of the Sanhedrim must have been, should resist the conviction of their own consciences, and prefer the vain breath of popular applause to the favour of God! How much more honour would they have obtained, had they paid homage to their SAVIOUR, and been received as members of his heavenly kingdom!

The gracious promise which our LORD, in the beginning of this section, addressed to the Greeks who desired to see him, "If any man serve me," &c. comprehends Christians of all nations in every age of the church. Who would not endure all dangers and difficulties to follow his SAVIOUR to heaven, and to be honoured in the sight of God?

We see that our LORD, though he was troubled at the view of his sufferings, stedfastly determined to submit

* See preceding Section.

to them for the glory of God the FATHER. Such a determination should every Christian make; for he may rest assured, that the SUPREME BEING will at length *glorify* his own name, by promoting the eternal happiness of every faithful servant. We must not expect indeed to be encouraged in the hour of affliction, as the SON of GOD was, by a voice from heaven, nor do we stand in need of it; for the words of consolation which were spoke by the MESSIAH, were designed for the whole race of mankind, and recorded by the Evangelist for the comfort of all who will seek them; and the HOLY SPIRIT also will, by a secret influence, support every good resolution.

Since it was with a view to draw all men to him, that JESUS was ordained to be lifted up on the cross, we should endeavour to awaken in our minds that lively and ardent affection which is due to him who suffered so much for our sakes.

As GOD has graciously vouchsafed us the light of the Gospel, let us, whilst the day of life lasts, improve the happy opportunity of practising every Christian duty; and that we may clearly understand every article of faith, let us study the Scriptures with *impartiality*, not *selecting* texts, as those who cavilled at our SAVIOUR did, to confirm any particular prejudice, but comparing one part with another; and then shall we be ready to believe the *report of the Prophets*, that JESUS was the ARM of the LORD, as well as the SON of David, though he had nothing in his outward appearance to distinguish him from other men.

SECTION XIII.

OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE BAPTISM OF JOHN.—THE PARABLE OF THE MAN WHO HAD TWO SONS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLDER.

From Luke, Chap. xx.

AND it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and scribes came upon him, with the elders,

And spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority?

And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: the baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?

And they reasoned with themselves, saying, if we shall say, From heaven, he will say, Why then believed ye him not?

But and if we say, Of men, all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, That they could not tell whence it was.

And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.

And he began to speak unto them in parables, saying, But what think ye? A certain man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard.

He answered and said, I will not, and afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said

said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir; and went not.

Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, the first. JESUS saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.

For John came to you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.

Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country.

And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that they might receive the fruits of it.

And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

Having yet therefore one son, his well beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son.

But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir, come let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husband-

husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

JESUS saith unto them, Did you never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the LORD's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

For whosoever shall fall upon this stone, shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables they perceived that he spake of them.

And when they had heard it, they said, God forbid.

But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears that the Jewish Sanhedrim, finding no one would venture to lay hold on JESUS, resolved to confront him in the Temple, not doubting but they should find some pretence for having him apprehended, and brought before their tribunal: they therefore insisted upon his producing his authority for all the extraordinary things he had said and done in the Temple. Instead of returning an answer, our LORD proposed another question to them. Nothing could so effectually have confounded his persecutors as the appeal which our LORD made to their own consciences; for it reduced them to the necessity either of acknowledging that he came from God, as John had declared, or of concealing their real sentiments. The reply which the Jews made shewed that the Sanhedrim had not yet examined the proofs of John's mission; from

from which our LORD fairly inferred, that this was necessary to be done before they questioned his authority ; because John's preaching related entirely to the MESSIAH, and he appeared as a witness that JESUS was the MESSIAH. Finding that the priests and rulers could not answer his questions, our LORD proposed a parable to them, which as we find, from his explanation of it, was intended to teach them, that notwithstanding their great profession of righteousness, they were, on account of their hypocrisy, regarded of GOD as disobedient children ; and that even the greatest sinners of the age were more open to conviction than they were ; and should, on repentance, be admitted as members of the kingdom ; while they, for obduracy, should be excluded.

It was as our LORD remarked, very evident that John's doctrine was from heaven, because it related entirely to spiritual things, and his life and conversation were consistent with it : therefore they were inexcusable who did not pay attention to what he taught.

When our LORD had thus reproved the chief priests and elders, he delivered another parable, which related to the whole Jewish nation.

GOD is here represented under the character of a householder, or one who has an estate of his own. The vineyard is his church, or religion, which he planted in the Jewish nation. By the hedge is meant, the covenant of circumcision, and the ceremonial law, which served to divide the Jews from other nations. The wine-press and tower signify the altar and temple. GOD may be said to have let his vineyard or church to the Jews, or rather to have hired them into it, when they were chosen to be his people. The fruit which GOD required was an observance of his laws. The servants sent to reprove the Jews for a violation of them were the prophets ; many of whom

whom were used with great cruelty, as we read in the Old Testament. The Son was the MESSIAH.

The Jews did not comprehend this parable; and were inadvertently led to pass sentence upon themselves, which our LORD told them should be executed upon them; for they should be cast out, and those heathen nations which they had hitherto despised should be planted in their stead; and he also prophesied, that God would derive more glory from the GOSPEL dispensation than from the Jewish. When the Jews heard this denunciation, and understood that the parable was addressed to them, they said, *God forbid this should be the case*: neither could they give credit to his assertion. Our LORD, therefore, with the greatest solemnity, appropriated to himself and his gospel a passage in one of the psalms; thus intimating the high dignity to which he should be advanced, notwithstanding his present humiliation, and warned them not to reject his doctrine; assuring them, that whoever through weakness, and fear of persecution, should be discouraged, or fall into unbelief, would be no longer a member of his kingdom, but would be utterly ruined; and whoever should obstinately resist the gospel would provoke divine vengeance to inflict judgments on him, and consign him to utter destruction.

Our LORD, in comparing himself and his gospel to a *stone*, seems to allude to Nebuchadnezzar's dream*, in which the kingdom of the God of heaven is compared to a stone cut out of a mountain without hands. When the chief Priests and Scribes found that CHRIST set them all at defiance, they were more enraged than ever; but as the people, though not convinced that JESUS was the MESSIAH, regarded him as a *prophet*, his persecutors could not, without the hazard of their own lives, seize him by

* See Sect. xxyii Vol. V.

open violence; they therefore retired to consult in private by what means they might best effect their malicious purpose.

If the Scribes and Pharisees had fairly examined the evidence of our SAVIOUR's authority, they could not have disputed it; for the ancient prophets particularly described him: John the Baptist, who was allowed by the Jews in general to have spoken by divine inspiration, declared him to be the SON OF GOD; and the miracles which our LORD wrought, and the doctrine he preached, were certain demonstrations that *he came out from God*.

Every one who reads the parable of the householder must perceive the justice of GOD in rejecting the Jewish nation, and should be cautious not to expose himself to the same condemnation. It will be to no purpose that we are admitted into the vineyard of GOD, if we forget that we have a part of it to cultivate. GOD expects that we should bring forth the fruits of good works, and treat his Son with reverence. If we neglect the former, our pretensions to piety will be of no avail; if we despise our SAVIOUR, we are partakers of the guilt of those who put him to death.

There is a great resemblance between this discourse of our LORD's, and a part of Isaiah's prophecy *.

SECTION XIV.

THE PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON.

From Matt. xxii.—Mark, xii.

AND he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes, and the chief of the people, sought to destroy him.

* See Annotations and Reflections, Sect. xc. Vol. V.

And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,

And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.

Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.

But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:

And the remnant took his servants, and intreated them spitefully, and slew them.

But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.

Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.

Go ye therefore into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.

So those servants went out into the high-ways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment? And he was speechless.

Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

For many are called, but few are chosen.

ANNOTATIONS

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD's discourses were so very engaging, that the people in general could not forbear paying the utmost attention to them; but the more efficacy they had, the greater was the rage of the Pharisees: however, he was not intimidated by them, but continued to preach daily. The parable of the wedding supper bears great resemblance to one spoken on another occasion; with this difference, that here it is said the feast was made by a *King* on account of the marriage of his son, and in the former there is no mention of the man who came without a wedding-garment.

The parable of the vineyard seems to have been particularly addressed to the Jewish rulers; this of the marriage supper to the people in general; and, indeed, it includes all to whom the gospel has at any time been made known.

By the King we are to understand God; by the marriage of his Son, the covenant betwixt CHRIST and believers; the good things prepared are the blessings of CHRIST's religion; the guests first invited were the Jews. When the invited guests were unmindful of the invitation they had received, the King sent to remind them of it, and to persuade them to come; this is figurative of God's goodness in sending the apostles to preach to the Jews after our LORD's death. The slighting behaviour of the guests represents the indifference and contempt with which the Jews treated the offer of salvation, occasioned by their attachment to worldly pursuits. By those who abused and ill-treated the messengers, are signified the Scribes and Pharisees, who our LORD knew would persecute the first propagators of the gospel. The resentment of the King shews God's wrath at these proceedings, and it

was prophetic of the judgments which would be inflicted on the Jewish nation, who were to be punished as murderers. (We shall have occasion to observe how this prediction was fulfilled.) The commission given by the King to his servants to go out into the highways and hedges, alludes to the calling of the Gentiles. By those who were *good* are meant such as were *well inclined*, and who practised in their *unconverted* state the *duties of morality*; and the *bad* are those who, before the gospel was preached to them, had been notoriously wicked *against the light of their consciences*. The man without a wedding garment signifies an hypocrite, one who pretends to accept the terms of salvation, but neglects to make the necessary preparation for it. The time of the King's coming means the day of judgment; and the punishment inflicted, the irreversible sentence of condemnation to be then passed on hypocrites. The conclusion of the parable, *Many are called but few chosen*, intimates that, notwithstanding God has furnished every inducement to excite all men to embrace the gospel, there will in all ages be numbers of profane, careless, and hypocritical persons, that will miss of salvation.

Those Christians who are descended from the Gentile nations, to whom the invitation was sent, after the rejection of the Jews, should reflect on the glorious privileges they enjoy, and notice the crimes which provoked the LORD to cast off his ancient people. Some amongst them were resolutely determined to reject the gospel at all events, and *would not come*. In Christian countries there are persons of this description: happy would it be, could these be persuaded to take warning by the fate of the Jews! Others were *careless*. How many are still indifferent in respect to their spiritual concerns! Equally intent on worldly gain, few of the inhabitants either of cities or villages will find leisure to attend to religious ordinances,

ordinances, unmindful of the danger of turning God's goodness into righteous indignation! Inward piety and holiness, a truly Christian disposition, is the wedding garment which all may obtain who will yield their minds to the instructions of the gospel, and accept the grace of God. Whoever is without these, though he may long have deceived mankind by plausible appearances, will be convicted by his own conscience, and consigned by his awful Judge to a state of inexpressible and everlasting torment and anguish of mind. Let us, therefore, obey with thankfulness the joyful invitation of our God and SAVIOUR, and endeavour to acquire those qualifications which are suitable to the Christian profession.

SECTION XV.

●OUR LORD CONFOUNDS THE PHARISEES AND HERODIANS.

From Matt. Chap. xxii.—Luke, xx.—Mark, xii.

THEN went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.

And they watched him, and sent forth some of their disciples, and of the Herodians, as spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

And when they were come they say unto him, Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth: Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute-money. And they brought unto him a penny.

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Cæsar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God, the things that are God's.

And they could not take hold of his words before the people; and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace. And they left him, and went their way.

The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.

Now there were with us seven brethren; and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother.

Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also.

Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

JESUS answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven.

And as touching the dead that they rise; have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;

He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; ye therefore do greatly err.

And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.

But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.

And

And one of the scribes who was a lawyer came, and having found them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

JESUS said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth; for there is one God, and there is none other but he.

And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

And when JESUS saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.

While the Pharisees were gathered together, JESUS asked them, saying, What think ye of CHRIST? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him LORD, saying, The LORD said unto my LORD, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

If David then call him LORD, how is he son?

And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Jewish rulers, finding their late attempt to detect Jesus of a breach of the Mosaic law ineffectual, resolved to proceed with artifice and flattery; for this purpose they sent some of their emissaries, who pretended to desire his advice in a case of conscience. The question they put was of a very ensnaring nature; for if he had told them it was lawful to pay tribute to *Cæsar*, they would have pretended that he certainly could not be the MESSIAH, or he would have defended the liberties of his people: and, on the other hand, had he forbidden them to do it, they would immediately have accused him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, as a seditious person; but our LORD knew their secret motives, and re-proved them for their hypocrisy: he then desired to see the tribute-money, on which one of them produced a Roman Denarius (a silver piece, of the value of seven pence halfpenny of our money). The Jews allowing this coin to be current among them, was a proof that they were in subjection to *Cæsar*; he therefore asked them, “Whose image and superscription it bore;” and on their answering *Cæsar*’s, he directed them so to conduct themselves, that they might not defraud the emperor of what he could justly demand in a province of his dominions; nor on the other hand, under pretence of duty to *Cæsar*, violate any of the commands of GOD. This answer disarmed his adversaries, and they retired disappointed and disgraced.

Our LORD was next attacked by the Sadducees, another sect of the Jews: they put a question to him concerning the resurrection of the dead, with which they supposed they should effectually puzzle him; but instead of exposing himself to their ridicule, as they expected, Jesus told them that their disbelief of a resurrection originated

originated from their not understanding the Scriptures. It was indeed necessary for men in general in this world to marry, and God had appointed the law which they alluded to for the preservation of every tribe amongst the Jews; but this had no reference to a future world, where good people would be in very different circumstances, and marriage quite useless: there all who should partake of the resurrection of life would, together with the holy angels, compose a happy society of glorified spirits. If they required proofs that this life was not the whole of man's existence, he need only refer them to one text of Scripture, in which God, speaking to *Moses* out of the burning bush, calls himself the God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*; which implied, that the patriarchs, though long dead, were at that time still existing; and if so, it might be inferred, that there was a future life prepared for all the faithful. For it was very erroneous to suppose, that the covenant which God made to be their *everlasting* friend and protector, was limited to the short period of human life; in which, so far from being more prosperous than other men, his chosen servants had frequently been exposed to the heaviest calamities.

This confutation of the Sadducees was very pleasing to the opposite sect of the Pharisees; and one of the Scribes amongst them, who was also a doctor of the law, imagined, that though our Lord had baffled the Sadducees, *he* could propose such a question as Jesus would be unable to answer to the entire satisfaction of all parties, for it had long been matter of dispute amongst the learned which was the greatest commandment; some contending for the law of circumcision, others for that of sacrifices, and some for that of the phylacteries *. But our
LORD

* The Jews taking Exod. xiii. 9, 16, Deut. vi. 8, 11, 18, in a literal sense, wore little scrolls or parchment on which these passages

LORD was prepared for every question, and answered the Scribe with such consummate wisdom, that he could not avoid acknowledging that JESUS certainly had decided it properly.

As this conference had excited the curiosity of all present, and the Pharisees were gathered together, our LORD in his turn put a question to them. They agreed in acknowledging, that the MESSIAH was to be the *Son of David*, but were ignorant in respect to his *divine nature*; they therefore knew not what reply to make. The cxth psalm was very obscure till CHRIST declared himself to be the SON of GOD as well as the *Son of David*: this explained the mystery at once; and no Christian, who believes his doctrine, will be at a loss to understand this passage, as it clearly points out that the LORD, or DIVINE WORD, would unite to himself the *promised seed* of David. This prediction of the royal psalmist was very properly produced by our SAVIOUR at the time when his enemies were gathered together; for it intimated to them, that he should sit at the right hand of GOD, and behold all those who opposed him vanquished and overcome. Thus did CHRIST silence his adversaries, and put a stop to their invidious questions.

By our LORD's answer concerning the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar, Christians are instructed, that it is their duty to pay what the laws of the country they live in require, towards the support of the government. They are also taught not to defraud GOD of his due. The tribute which the SUPREME BEING requires, is praise and adoration, a portion of our time, and a part of our worldly possessions for the relief of the poor and needy.

How comfortable to our hopes is our LORD's defence

were written, which were called Phylacteries, and regarded as charms to keep them from danger.

of

of the doctrine of the resurrection! In what manner the soul exists in a state of separation from the body, is beyond our conception; therefore we are not told, neither does it concern us to know. It is sufficient for us to be assured, that all who are faithful to God, shall be equal with the angels in heaven. Let us, then, stedfastly reject the false arguments of unbelievers who deny this important article of faith; for we may depend on it, God has better things in store for those who truly serve him, than this transitory fluctuating state affords, even to the happiest among the children of men, and let us imprint on our minds the two great commandments of the Law, and regulate our lives accordingly: in order to this, we must enquire what is meant by them. “The love of God is a sentiment inculcated in the Scriptures alone, the *heathens* were only taught to *fear* their imaginary deities; but *Christianity* having given us an infinitely great, good, and holy God to worship, requires from us the purest and devoutest sentiments of *affection* towards him; and, with great justice, makes the *love* of our MAKER an indispensable requisite in religion, and the grand fundamental duty of a *Christian* *.”

“The love of God is not an enthusiastic warmth of imagination; it is not an imaginary zeal and mystical union with God, but a sincere desire of doing what is pleasing to him, and of promoting his honour and glory, by conforming our lives to his Divine will.” *This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments†.* But though it is proper to guard the mind against overstrained pietism, it is equally necessary to avoid the opposite extreme of a cold and cautious indifference; for

* See Bishop Porteus’s Sermons, from whence the above explanation of the love of God is chiefly extracted; also Bishop Newton’s Dissertation on this subject.

† 1 John, v. 3.

an *inward affection* must accompany our *outward obedience*. We are commanded not merely to *love God*, but to *love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength*, and we must *obey him* in the same manner; that is, with zeal, with alacrity, with vigour, with perseverance, with the united force of all our faculties and powers. The love of God, then, we may understand, consists of *devoutness of heart*, as well as *purity of life*. It is a reverential admiration of God's perfections in general, and such a grateful sense of his infinite goodness in particular, as render the contemplation and the worship of him delightful to us; and produce in us a constant desire and endeavour to please him in every part of our moral or religious conduct. It is only a purer degree of that very same affection, which we frequently entertain for some of the most worthy of the human species. If we know what it is to love a good parent, to honour a good king, to esteem a faithful friend, to be grateful to a benefactor, we must combine these sentiments, and improve them to the most exalted degree our nature is capable of, without enthusiasm, and they will produce the kind of affection which men ought to have for their CREATOR; "for he is, in the strictest sense of the words, our parent, protector, governor, friend, and benefactor, all in one."

"It is true, indeed, there is one difference, our earthly friends are *seen*, our heavenly one is *unseen*; but we know, that God is every where present; that he is not far from any one of us: in him we live, and move, and have our being. Though we see him not, yet his kindness and bounty to us we see and feel every moment of our lives. Let us, therefore, love him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; obey his precepts, adore his perfections; and, as far as human infirmity will allow, endeavour

endeavour to imitate them. Let us delight to think and to speak of God, omitting no opportunity of conversing with him in private or public prayer; of pouring out our souls before him on all occasions, whether of sorrow or joy; intreating pardon for our offences, and imploring his assistance for our future conduct, and submitting with patience to the corrections of his fatherly hand. Let us commit all our concerns to the Great Disposer of events, with a firm persuasion, that every thing will work together for our good, if we make the love of him the leading principle of our actions."

The love of our Maker certainly is the FIRST AND GREAT COMMANDMENT; for it is agreeable to reason, that the *Supreme LORD of all*, the *first and greatest*, and *best* of Beings, should have the first place in our regards; and that those duties which respect him as their immediate object, should have the precedence and command over every other.

* Having answered the question of the Scribe, by telling him, that the *love of God* was the *great commandment*, our LORD added, that the second was like unto it, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. CHRIST had, on a former occasion, by the parable of the *good Samaritan*, taught, that *all mankind* are to be considered as our *neighbours*; he now intimated, that the love of our fellow-creatures was deducible from our love of God: for as the DIVINE BEING is our common Father, and equally concerned for the welfare of all his children, those who are bound to love HIM, cannot be at liberty to hurt or oppress those whom God has taken under his care and protection; for if it be our duty and interest to please God, it must also be our duty and

interest to be kind and tender towards those who *are the children of God*, and in whose happiness he is not an unconcerned spectator. But we must remember, that the *love of our neighbour* does not consist in formal professions of affection and good-will; for our SAVIOUR requires us to *Do unto all men as we would they should do unto us*. This, as has been already observed, is so plain a precept, that the meanest understanding may comprehend it. But we may be farther instructed in respect to the application of it, by studying the Commandments of the second table of the moral law of Moses, which our SAVIOUR's precepts were calculated to enforce. Let us carefully study these, and remember our SAVIOUR's declaration, that *on the LOVE OF GOD, and THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR, hang all the Law and the Prophets*. The meaning of which is, that nothing contrary to them is taught by the Law and the Prophets, but all religion is reducible to one or other of these two principles: therefore, we must not depend for salvation on the performance of the mere ceremonials of religion, for all devotion is empty and vain, that has not the *love of God* for its basis; and it is genuine charity and good-will to our fellow-creatures alone, that can render our moral actions acceptable in the sight of God.

SECTION XVI.

CHRIST DENOUNCES WOES AGAINST THE
PHARISEES.

From Matt. Chap. xxiii.

THEN spake JESUS to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat,

ALL

All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ; but do not ye after their works : for they say, and do not.

For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and they lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

But all their works they do, for to be seen of men : they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments.

And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even CHRIST, and all ye are brethren.

And call no man your father upon the earth : for one is your Father who is in heaven.

Neither be ye called masters : for one is your Master, even CHRIST. But he that is greatest among you, shall be your servant.

And whomsoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased : and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted.

But wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites : for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering, to go in.

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Wo unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall

shall swear by the temple, it is nothing ; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor.

Ye fools, and blind : for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold ?

And whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing : but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

Ye fools, and blind : for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift ?

Whoso, therefore, shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon ;

And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein ;

And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites : for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith : these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye make clean the outside of the cup, and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ; for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Wo

Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous.

And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.

Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy chickens together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Behold your house is left unto you desolate.

For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD having, as we read in the last section, by
his.

his question concerning an expression in the cxth Psalm, exposed the ignorance of the Scribes and Pharisees, proceeded to caution the people who were present against their delusions; he enjoined them to pay proper respect to the Scribes and Pharisees, as teachers of the *Law of Moses*, and to practise the duties which they taught from that law, but by no means to imitate their actions. Our Lord then enlarged on the hypocrisy, pride, arrogance, and superstition of the Pharisees, and strongly recommended a contrary behaviour to all his disciples, particularly those who were to preach the Gospel; "teaching them not to spend their zeal on the externals of religion, and make their devotion a cloak for maliciousness and fraud; nor lay down rules for the conduct of others, by which they could not govern themselves; nor yet to affect superiority over each other, but to live like brethren. He also cautioned them to retain the greatest reverence for an oath, and not to use evasions in a matter which, however expressed, was in effect a solemn appeal to God himself."

From our LORD's description of the Pharisees, we discover the justice of his severe denunciations against them. The crimes for which they were notorious are so particularly enumerated, that we cannot fail of perceiving the enormity of them. It was very evident, from their strenuous opposition to our LORD himself, that they exactly resembled their forefathers, who persecuted the prophets; and the sequel of the history will shew, that our LORD's prediction respecting their treatment of the Apostles was, after his death, exactly verified.

It was certainly consistent with our LORD's character as MESSIAH, to denounce these woes against the Jewish teachers; and his indignation was very just, as they so
highly

highly dishonoured the name of the FATHER: for CHRIST had repeatedly offered them salvation, which they disdainfully rejected. All their personal malice to himself, our LORD bore with astonishing meekness; and even at this time he expressed the utmost grief, that the inhabitants of Jerusalem (amongst whom the Pharisees were the chief) would not listen to his tender and affectionate invitations, so often repeated, but repaid his love with contempt, hatred, and persecution.

Our LORD's declaration, that, from henceforth, they should see him no more, &c. may be understood to mean, that this would be his last visit to Jerusalem, and that the unbelieving Jews should see him no more till he came in his glory to judge the world.

The present section appears to contain a recapitulation of all the woes formerly denounced by our LORD against the Scribes and Pharisees, with some additional ones. We may observe great resemblance between this discourse, and that uttered when he dined at the house of a Pharisee, which justifies the opinion, that our LORD sometimes repeated the very things he had publicly uttered before, and reconciles many seeming contradictions in the writings of the different Evangelists. We may however, suppose, that our LORD did not make these repetitions to the *same audience*, nor in instances where his instructions were *local*. It was a part of the office of the MESSIAH, to warn the Jewish teachers of the judgments they would bring on themselves, by persisting in their spirit of persecuting the prophets, and other righteous men. Some or other of the Scribes and Pharisees perpetually watched him; yet, as they were numerous, we cannot think that *all* followed him wherever he went; therefore, had our LORD omitted to warn *any* of them, they might have pleaded ignorance of God's impending

impending judgments : and it appears more consistent with the character of a *Divine Teacher* (who in respect to his public instructions, professed to speak agreeably to the impulse of the in-dwelling GODHEAD) to make use of the *same form of words*, as far as the *occasion agreed*, than to affect a *variety of expression*, according to the custom of *men*, since the dictates of *infinite wisdom* could not be *improved* ; and the *sentiments of the Deity* (if it may be so expressed) must be *invariable* and *impartial*. Let us, then, never suffer our faith to be shaken by those who reject the Gospels, because one Evangelist sometimes relates a discourse as having passed at one period of our LORD's ministry, which another refers to a different one ; since we find an argument may be drawn from this very circumstance, that JESUS spake the words of the LORD GOD.—Let us consider how awful they are on the present occasion ; and be careful not to draw down upon ourselves the woes denounced against the SCRIBES and PHARISEES !

SECTION XVII.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

From Mark, Chap. xii.

AND JESUS sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury : and many that were rich cast in much.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury.

For

For they all did cast in of their abundance : but she of her want did cast all in that she had, even all her living.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The treasury was a part of the temple, where the chests stood which contained the contributions of the people. At this public time, they brought their offerings and gifts towards the expences of that holy edifice. The money thus collected was expended in wood for the altar, salt, and other necessaries, not provided for in any other way. The poor widow saw the rich cast in a part of their superfluities, and had she been possessed of *abundance*, she would have exceeded many of them in liberality ; for her heart was filled with gratitude to God, nor could she be contented without giving some testimony of it ; she, therefore, resolved to cast in all she was worth. This shews, that her mind was habituated to trusting in Divine Providence ; and that she had none of those anxious fears of future want which so often add to the bitterness of poverty. It is to be supposed, that this woman had no family at home, who stood in need of any provision, for in that case she would have been *reproved* and not *commended* by our LORD ; as he had repeatedly declared, that his FATHER preferred *mercy* to *sacrifice*. His commendation of her pious action shews, that the smallest services are acceptable to God : and teaches us not to despise the *poor*, since many of them are rich in good works ; and it is the *principle* and *circumstances* of an action which recommend it, more than the *outward appearance* of it.

SECTION XVIII.

JESUS FORETELS THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

From Matt. Chap. xxiv.—Mark, Chap. xiii.

Luke, Chap. xxi.

AND as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones, and what buildings are here.

And JESUS said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when these things shall be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

And JESUS answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am CHRIST: and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places.

But before all these they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers, for my name's sake.

And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Settle

Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye answer.

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.

And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

The brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son, and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish.

In your patience possess ye your souls.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring.

Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels, with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Now

Now learn a parable of the fig-tree : When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh :

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

A full explanation of the prophetic discourse, which our LORD delivered at this time, cannot be given without anticipating the history of those events to which it related ; but, in a proper place, we will examine it particularly : at present, it will be sufficient to mention, that he predicted the destruction of the Jewish nation. In answer to his disciples' enquiry, " When those things would be ? And what would be the sign of his coming, and of the end of the world ? " He told them, that the Gospel would first be preached *in all the world* : this, according to the usual mode of speaking at that time, might mean the *Roman empire*, which was regarded as the *whole world* ; for the *Romans* had then no intercourse with any people but those they had conquered.

Our LORD gave his disciples particular directions how to conduct themselves, when they saw the destruction of the Jewish nation approaching ; and encouraged them to persist in the *truth*, and to be stedfast in their attachment to him, by assurances, that all the cruelty and hardships which their persecutors should inflict, would finally prove a public and honourable testimony of their uprightness and integrity, and the goodness of their cause.—Our LORD knew, that when these tribulation

shall fall upon the Jews, they would, as he had formerly predicted, begin to seek for their MESSIAH to deliver them; he therefore warned his disciples, that they might not be deluded, and informed them, that the coming of the *Son of Man* would be very different from that of those impostors; for he should not appear personally on earth, but send judgments from heaven, sudden and rapid as lightning, on all his foes, from one end of Judea to the other: while those false Messiahs would retire into deserts and secret places, in order to form confederacies and raise armies. Our LORD informed his disciples, that *after the tribulation of those days the sun should be darkened, and the moon should not give her light, and the powers of heaven should be shaken.* These are strong figurative expressions, such as had frequently been used by the antient Prophets, to describe the ruin of kingdoms; and may be understood to mean the entire dissolution of the whole church and nation of the Jews, which would be a certain sign of the SON OF MAN *dwelling in heaven*: agreeably to a prediction which our LORD alluded to in a former discourse with the Pharisees, “that he should sit at the right hand of God, till he had made his enemies his footstool.” The judgments he should then inflict, would naturally cause *all the tribes to mourn*; and ought to be considered as an earnest of his second coming at the end of the world, to pass sentence on the wicked, and gather the just to himself. The latter part of our LORD’s discourse is generally supposed to refer to his second coming, when it will be literally fulfilled, as it agrees with other passages of Scripture, which lead us to believe that all things will be changed; and though in this place our LORD’s words appear to be *figurative*, we may safely apply to his second advent every expression that agrees with other plainer predictions concerning it.

SECTION XIX.

ADMONITIONS CONCERNING WATCHFULNESS.

From Matt. Chap. xxiv.—Mark, xiii.—Luke, xxi.

BUT of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

For as, in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark ;

And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Take ye heed, watch and pray : for ye know not when the time is.

For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.

Watch ye therefore (for ye know not when the master of the house cometh : at even, or at midnight, or in the morning).

Lest coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch,

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.

For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall

shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord, when he cometh, shall find watching: Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

And this I know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

Then Peter said unto him, LORD, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

And the LORD said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

But, and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants, and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not

aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

And that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes;

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When we read an account of the destruction of the Jewish nation, we shall find, that notwithstanding all the signs which our LORD foretold actually preceded, it was still to the Jews sudden and unexpected; and so will be our LORD's second coming; it is, therefore, in vain for any person to pretend to form conjectures how long the present state of the world will last. The precise *day* and *hour* appointed for the destruction of Jerusalem, or the day of judgment (which he alluded to), was, according to his own declaration, unknown even to our LORD himself, whilst in his *human* state. From whence we may infer, that his *soul* being *inferior* to his *Divine nature*, could not, by its human faculties, obtain knowledge of *spiritual things*, but stood in need of communications from the GODHEAD, in respect to subjects above their reach, as our bodies do of the intelligence of our minds to direct them to *rational* actions; and, if this was the case, our LORD might, as *man*, be unacquainted with particulars, which were perfectly known to him as GOD. But it is of little use to indulge our curiosity in speculations on such difficult passages

as

as this ; when in a future state the powers of our minds shall be enlarged, what now appears dark and obscure, will be clear and intelligible to us. In the mean time, as the *hour* of our LORD's coming is, without doubt, unknown to *us*, we should live in a course of constant preparation for it, since the day of our death will determine our future state of happiness or misery : and it will make no difference to us, whether it happens in our generation or many ages hence, or whether our SAVIOUR knows the precise day and hour, or not.

Let us, then, give our attention to the duties appointed us, and pray with fervency for Divine grace, that we be not surprised in the midst of vicious courses ; for in proportion to our crimes will be our punishment ; and according to our obedience and faith shall we meet with rewards*.

SECTION XX.

THE PARABLE OF THE VIRGINS—OF THE TALENTS—
AND AN ACCOUNT OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

From Matt. Chap. xxv.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their

* I have added to what properly belongs to this section part of a discourse which our LORD evidently delivered on a former occasion, as both contain *general* instructions of the same nature.

lamps, While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready, went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut.

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods:

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey.

Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.

And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

And so he that received five talents, came, and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst

veredst unto me five talents : behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents ; behold I have gained two other talents beside them.

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Then he which had received the one talent, came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed :

And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, there thou hast that is thine.

His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed ;

Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents.

For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance : but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath.

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.

And before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats :

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in :

Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, LORD, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ?

And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink :

I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, LORD, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ?

Then

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

And these last shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Our LORD having, as we read in the last section, strongly recommended *watchfulness*, proceeded to enforce the necessity of it, in his usual manner, by familiar comparisons.

The parable of the *ten virgins* represents the administration of CHRIST's government towards those who shall be at his second coming in a state of preparation for the kingdom of heaven, and those who have been careless in respect to qualifying themselves for it.

It was a part of the marriage ceremony amongst the Jews, for the bridegroom to come in the night, accompanied by his friends, to the house of the bride, where she expected him, attended by her bride-maids; who, upon notice given them of the bridegroom's approach, went out with lamps in their hands to light him into the guest chamber, in order to celebrate the nuptials with rejoicings and festivity.

By the *bridegroom* in the parable is represented our LORD JESUS CHRIST. The marriage is the day of judgment, and the virgins are the professors of his religion. From hence we may understand the nature of Christianity. As Christians we profess ourselves to be attendants upon our LORD, to do him honour. We are required not only to *believe*, but to *long* for his second coming; and to act, through the whole course of our lives, with a regard to it. The knowledge of the gospel is the *light*, our *hearts* the *vessels* which we must furnish with

it, and then endeavour to make it shine forth to the world. The *wise* virgins represent *sincere* Christians; the *foolish* ones, such as think they have righteousness enough if they can pass in the world for just persons; but have not that stock of sound knowledge, good dispositions, and settled resolutions, which are necessary to carry them through the trials of the present state. They have little thought of a future life, and make no provision for it.

While the bridegroom tarried, both the wise and foolish virgins slumbered and slept: this intimates, that Christians in general are apt to remit their watchfulness and zeal, forgetful that the time of their LORD's coming is uncertain. Yet there is a difference among them: those who are sincere professors of Christianity, when they find their death approaching, will seriously review their past lives, and endeavour to make the best preparation in their power to meet our LORD with joyfulness; whilst those who have contented themselves with empty professions of religion will wish in vain for the comforts of it. If we neglect to furnish our minds with Christian virtues, the prayers of good men will avail us nothing; neither can we (as the Romish church absurdly pretends to allow) purchase a share in the righteousness of others, for the best of men have not enough for their own salvation. Each, therefore, must endeavour to provide for himself, and have recourse to the appointed means of grace, repentance, and the mercy of GOD through CHRIST. But it is very dangerous to defer this great work till the end of life approaches, as it is a great chance whether time will be allowed to do it in; and those who have trifled away the day of grace will be for ever disowned by their GOD and SAVIOUR.

The parable of the *talents* bears so exact a resemblance

blance to that of the *pounds* *, that it is needless to comment on it.

When our LORD had represented his last coming by the foregoing parables, he proceeded to give a plainer account of it in a manner which conveys a most striking and affecting image of it. The representation our LORD made of this awful event affords a subject of delightful contemplation to those who are truly religious, and is calculated to raise terror in the minds of the wicked. It is impossible for any thing to be more interesting than the scene here described; for every individual of the human species who has formerly lived upon earth, who is now alive in the world, or who shall be born into it, is a party concerned. The highest monarch must obey the summons of his heavenly Judge; the meanest slave will be admitted to put in his plea: at this equitable tribunal, justice will be administered without error or partiality, for the secrets of all hearts will be disclosed. The sentence of condemnation will not fall merely on abandoned and notorious sinners, but on all who have lived in an habitual neglect of their duty. Neither will those only, who have led lives of *eminent piety* in *high stations* on earth, be admitted to the glories of the kingdom of heaven; for the humblest Christian will be acknowledged by his SAVIOUR as one of his brethren, provided he has believed in him, obeyed his laws, and imitated his blessed example, as far as his circumstances in life, and the infirmities of human nature, would admit.

Every one has not the ability to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, &c.; for many stand in need of these offices being performed for them, but such have duties of a different kind: if they have health and strength, they must labour to procure food and raiment for themselves,

* See Sect. iv.

and should copy the pattern of their SAVIOUR in his contentment, and cheerful acquiescence to a state of poverty.

Let us carefully observe the goodness of God in thus stamping a value on our imperfect services. The utmost we can do for *each other* cannot increase the happiness of the SUPREME BEING: neither could it entitle us to an *eternal reward*; for the greatest recompense we could have expected for our most benevolent actions, would have been a return of gratitude and reciprocal kindness from our *fellow-creatures*, the pleasure which naturally results from doing good, and the applauses of *mankind*. But by performing acts of charity *for the sake of* CHRIST, and his acceptance of them, as done to himself, they become *meritorious* in the sight of the SUPREME BEING; for he who loveth the SON, the FATHER will honour; and he who honoureth the SON, honour-eth GOD, who was manifested in him.

The best way of feeling the force of these injunctions of our blessed LORD is to become an eye-witness of scenes of poverty and wretchedness. Whoever beholds the various distresses of the poor will surely long to relieve them, especially when they consider the poor as brethren, not only to themselves, but to that benevolent SAVIOUR who has done and suffered so much for their sake, and is ready to repay their compassion with everlasting happiness.

SECTION XXI.

JUDAS AGREES WITH THE CHIEF PRIESTS TO BETRAY HIS LORD.—THE APOSTLES MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE PASSOVER.

From Luke, Chap. xxi.—Matt. xxvi.—Luke, xxii.

Mark, xiv.

AND in the day-time Jesus was teaching in the temple, and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.

And

And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.

Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast-day, lest there be an uproar among the people.

Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them :

And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you ? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover ?

And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand, I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

And he sendeth forth Peter and John, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water : follow him.

And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples ?

And

And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared : there make ready for us.

And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them : and they made ready the passover.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is observable, that though our LORD was well apprised of the infamous proceedings of JUDAS and the chief priests, he continued his heavenly work with the utmost composure : but, to shew that nothing relating to his sufferings was hidden from him, when he had finished his public teaching, he informed his disciples of the very day he should be betrayed, yet declared his determination to keep the passover once more at Jerusalem ; and to encourage them to prepare it, he foretold a variety of circumstances which tended to confirm their faith in him.

Judas Iscariot was a man of a very covetous disposition ; his reproof of Mary for her late liberality in anointing JESUS with costly ointment, shewed that he neither loved nor honoured his divine MASTER. He had also very dishonest principles, was destitute of charity to the poor, and a great hypocrite. In such a heart as his, divine grace would not abide. JUDAS had been indulged with the fairest opportunities of learning his duty, for he was of the number of those who were chosen friends and companions to our blessed LORD : but as he slighted these advantages, he was left to follow his own wicked inclinations, and exposed to the temptations of the great enemy of mankind, who suggested to him the horrid design of betraying his MASTER, which he immediately resolved to put in execution. The price offered to Judas by the Sanhedrim amounted

amounted to about three pounds fifteen shillings of our money ; a sum fixed by the law of Moses to be paid by the owner of a beast which had accidentally killed a slave belonging to another person. This trifling sum they proposed, to shew their contempt of Jesus ; and JUDAS, with astonishing meanness, accepted it. The prophet Zechariah predicted this circumstance, as we shall have occasion to remark in another place.

SECTION XXII.

A DISPUTE AMONGST THE APOSTLES—JESUS WASHES
THEIR FEET.

From Luke, Chap. xxii.—John, xiii.

AND in the evening Jesus cometh with the twelve. And there was also strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.

And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them ; and they that exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors.

But ye shall not be so ; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger ; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat ? or he that serveth ? is not he that sitteth at meat ? but I am among you as he that serveth.

Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me :

That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out

of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end ;

And supper being ended (the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him) ;

JESUS knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God,

He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself.

After that, he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Then cometh he to Simon Peter : and Peter saith unto him, LORD, dost thou wash my feet ?

JESUS answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.

Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. JESUS answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

Simon Peter saith unto him, LORD, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

JESUS saith to him, He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all.

For he knew who should betray him ; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you ?

Ye call me master, and LORD : and ye say well : for so I am.

If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

For

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

Verily, verily I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he that sent him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When *Peter* and *John* were gone to make the requisite preparations, we may suppose our LORD retired, and spent the greatest part of the day in prayer, and afterwards followed them to Jerusalem with the rest of his apostles. It seems that, during his absence, his apostles fell into discourse concerning his prediction, that he should suffer death in two days, and that this led to a conversation on his glory which was to follow: hence might arise the contention respecting their pre-eminence, in the kingdom of heaven. It is probable, that our LORD joined them before the dispute was ended; and reconciled them to each other by reminding them, that the exercise of power and authority, under the name of *benefactors*, was the character of Gentile kings; but that the greatest honour his disciples could attain would be by doing all the good in their power, which would make them real benefactors. It was never intended that his disciples should *rule*, but *serve*, others; he intimated that he, though deservedly called their LORD and Master, had never affected state and grandeur; on the contrary, he was always ready to do any office of kindness and service for them. Thus did our LORD, with the utmost mildness, correct their error; and, unwilling to make them sorrowful with the fear of his displeasure when he was so near leaving them, he kindly added, that although he forbade them to aspire after temporal power, they should in the kingdom

dom

dom of heaven be exalted to thrones of glory, as a reward for their stedfast adherence to him in all his trials.

When our LORD arrived at Jerusalem he was at no loss to find the house, where he was to eat the passover; and we may conclude, he eat the paschal lamb in the usual manner with his disciples: he then rose from table before the ceremony concluded, and prepared for the institution of that rite which was to supersede the passover, and keep up a spiritual communication betwixt him and his faithful servants till the end of the world. We are told, that before the passover (that is, through the whole course of his ministry) JESUS loved his apostles: and his behaviour afterwards evinced, that he retained his affection for them to the end of his life. While our LORD was celebrating the feast with them, his mind seems to have been occupied with various meditations: he knew that *Judas* was about to betray him; he knew also, that GOD the FATHER would, notwithstanding he should be delivered up to his enemies, commit to him the government of all things, both in heaven and earth, on account of his union with the DIVINE WORD, who had, *from all eternity*, been the *visible governor of the universe*, and would never separate from him, as he had resigned his soul to do the divine will. That he might therefore fulfil this to the utmost while on earth, our LORD resolved, before he left the world, to give the most striking example possible of that humility and brotherly love which constitutes the very spirit of his gospel; especially as, notwithstanding he had frequently recommended these virtues, he had so lately had occasion to reprove his disciples for the want of them, nothing could answer this purpose so well as the method he made use of.

Simon Peter, who certainly had a high degree of veneration and respect for our LORD, was greatly affected with

with this act of condescension, and would have refused his offer; but Jesus desired him to accept it, promising, that when he had done he would explain the meaning of it; assuring Peter, that unless he complied in this instance he should no longer consider him as his disciple. On this, Peter most affectionately resigned himself to his LORD's good pleasure, requesting that he would wash not only his feet, but his head and hands also; but our LORD replied, that he did not imagine those members stood in need of washing now, for they had not, like the feet, been exposed to the dirt since they were made clean.

As in every action our LORD had a spiritual meaning, we cannot suppose that on the present occasion he meant merely to cleanse his apostles from the outward defilement they had contracted by walking to Jerusalem: we will, therefore, consider it in an allegorical sense, and as preparatory to the rite he was about to institute: and then it may be understood to intimate, that a thorough purification of mind is necessary in order to qualify Christians for receiving the sacrament of the LORD's supper; and that he intended to point out to his apostles in particular, that even after keeping the passover with the utmost solemnity, they were still deficient in righteousness. From his answer to Peter, *He that is washed needed not, save to wash his feet*, we may understand, that those who are habitually pious do not need such a thorough repentance and change of life as those who are wicked and profane; though it is requisite to endeavour, before they approach the LORD's table, to examine themselves, and express contrition even for the sins of infirmity and ignorance. But there is no one who can say "*I am free from wilful sin.*"

By our LORD's expression, *Ye are clean but not all*, it appears that this action was *figurative*; for, in a *spiritual*

real light, his apostles were all clean excepting the traitor Judas, whose heart was open to the inspection of his LORD, though he thought himself secure from discovery.

When our LORD had resumed his seat at the table, he, agreeably to his promise, explained his principal view in performing this servile office, and enjoined them to do to others as he had done to them. Not that he required their imitation of this particular action, but that they should apply the instruction it afforded to every proper occasion; and think nothing beneath them that was conducive to the purification of others from the defilement of sin; since the DIVINE WORD himself, who came down from heaven, and knew that he should return thither again, not only took the form of a servant, by assuming *human nature*, but even through that nature, condescended to perform an office of the most servile kind.

SECTION XXIII.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

From Luke, Chap. xxiv.—Matt. xxvi.

AND JESUS said unto his apostles, with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.

For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

And as they were eating, JESUS took bread, and blessed it, and break it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it:

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

But

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine ; until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though our blessed Redeemer knew that this passover would lead to his death, so great was his love for mankind, that far from wishing to withdraw himself, he declared that he earnestly longed for its coming ; and particularly desired to eat it with his apostles, that it might give them every demonstration of his tender regard, and likewise instruct them in all things necessary for them to know and teach.

The Paschal Lamb was eaten in remembrance of the LORD's passing over the houses of the Israelites in that night when he destroyed the first-born of the Egyptians. And God commanded the Israelites, by Moses, to celebrate the passover every year, which they did with great solemnity.

The LORD's passing over the houses of the Israelites, and the drowning of the Egyptians, was a type of his spiritual dispensation towards mankind ; and signified, that the incorrigibly wicked would be consigned to utter destruction, and the rest saved *through faith*. The *paschal lamb* was a type of the MESSIAH ; therefore, when he should have offered himself as a sacrifice for the *sins of the whole world*, the ordinance of the *passover* would be *unnecessary* ; because a *new COVENANT* taking place in which *all nations* were included, that ordinance, which related only to the *Jews*, was not sufficiently comprehensive for the commemoration of GOD's *greater mercy* : our LORD therefore appointed the EUCHARIST, which we call the " LORD'S SUPPER, (on account of its having been instituted when he eat his last supper with his apostles), as the *Sacrament of the NEW COVENANT*, designed to commemorate the death of

of CHRIST, and give Christians an opportunity of expressing their faith in GOD's mercy through him: let us consider our SAVIOUR's actions on this occasion, which will confirm what has been now said.

Having, in obedience to the law of Moses, divided the paschal lamb, and eaten of it with his disciples, our LORD intimated, that this ceremony would for the future be useless: for, instead of taking a cup of wine, distributing it to the rest, and imploring the divine blessing on that institution, as was usual for the master of the family to do after eating the passover, our LORD took bread, and, returning a solemn thanksgiving to GOD the FATHER, he brake the bread, and divided that amongst his disciples, desiring them to receive it as a *representative* of his *body*, which he should shortly offer as a sacrifice on the cross.

With the same solemnity our LORD took the cup, which, we may suppose, represented the blood of the paschal lamb*, and presented it to his apostles; desiring them, whenever they solemnised his death†, to make use of wine as a *representative* of his blood; that blood, which was the seal of the new Covenant, by which GOD engaged, for the sake of the perfect obedience of CHRIST, to remit and pardon the sins of all who would repent, and accept the terms of salvation.

Our LORD did not *himself* partake either of the bread or wine; there would have been an impropriety in his doing it: but he intimated, that in a future state his true disciples should with him partake of that spiritual refreshment and joy, which bread and wine figuratively expressed.

It was customary to sing an hymn of praise to GOD

* As every part of the Jewish ceremonies was figurative, the above conjecture appears reasonable; for their writers inform us, wine was drank at the passover in a solemn manner.

† 1 Cor. xi. 26.

(consisting of some of David's psalms) at the close of the passover. There was now an additional cause for thanksgiving; and the apostles, by their LORD's direction, lifted up their voices together in strains of humble adoration and gratitude. There is great reason to believe, that JESUS himself joined with them, and selected one of the psalms said to have been made use of at the passover, which were all very applicable to his own circumstances, viz. psalms cxiii, cxv, cxvi, cxvii, cxviii.

This section acquaints us with the *manner* in which our LORD instituted the EUCHARIST. The *nature* and *end* of this institution were farther explained by the apostles, particularly by St. Paul, who informs us, that it was designed to commemorate our LORD's death till his coming again to judge the world, and receive his faithful people into his heavenly kingdom*. Such being the end of this divine institution, those who call themselves Christians are under an indispensable obligation to comply with it; for all stand in need of that salvation which CHRIST purchased for mankind by his death, and all are bound to testify their gratitude for this inestimable benefit in the way which CHRIST himself has appointed. That person who neglects to perform the dying request of an earthly friend and benefactor is justly regarded as ungrateful; and surely the last injunctions of the ever-blessed Redeemer ought to be universally obeyed; yet how frequently do we see professed Christians turning their backs upon the table of the LORD, and thoughtlessly slighting the bread of life and the cup of salvation! Not that any one can be saved merely by eating that bread, and drinking of that cup, unless the act is accompanied by repentance, faith, and thanksgiving: but this sacrament is the appointed means of obtaining salvation through CHRIST.

* 1 Cor. xi.

SECTION XXIV.

JESUS DISCOVERS THE PURPOSE OF JUDAS, AND GIVES
A NEW COMMANDMENT.

From John, Chap. xiii.

If ye know these things, said Jesus, happy are ye if ye do them.

I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen; but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me, hath lifted up his heel against me.

Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.

Verily, verily I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.

When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, LORD, is it I?

And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

The Son of Man goeth, as is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed: it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples whom Jesus loved.

Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

He then lying on Jesus' breast, saith unto him, LORD, who is it?

Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.

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Then Judas which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.

And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot the son of Simon.

And after the sop, Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.

Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast: or that he should give something to the poor.

He then having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night.

Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself; and shall straightway glorify him.

Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you,

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How amiable was our Lord's behaviour towards the traitor Judas? Instead of publicly reproaching him for his ingratitude, which would have exposed him to the rage of the other Apostles, he laid aside private resentment, and supported, to the last moment of his life, the

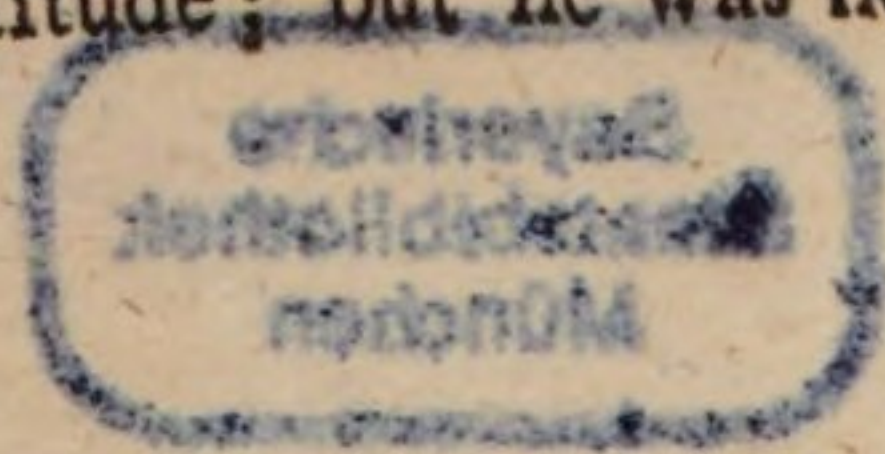
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character of the MESSIAH. It was proper that our LORD should give those select witnesses who were, after his death, to bear testimony to his life and actions, every satisfactory proof that he was the CHRIST: for this purpose he told his Apostles, that the hearts of every one of those whom he had chosen to be his intimate companions were perfectly known to him, and that one of them would betray him. Our LORD intimated, that he had power to restrain the malice of this false friend; but since the honour of God required the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the circumstance relating to his being betrayed, he was resolved to let the traitor take his course, after he had done all that was consistent with his own character, for his reformation. And that the rest of his Apostles might be encouraged to maintain his cause, notwithstanding the success of his enemies against him, our LORD assured them, that he would support their interest as his own. It appears, that our LORD's sensibility was greatly wounded by the ingratitude of Judas, and that he felt a benevolent sorrow for the ruin this sordid wretch was going to bring on himself; and our LORD did not reply to the earnest solicitations of his Apostles to tell them the name of the traitor. Those who were innocent, had already been assured by our LORD that he did not suspect *them*, for *he knew all whom he had chosen*; but he privately gave to his beloved disciple John a sign, with a view to prove that he knew not only that he should be betrayed, but also who the person was that should betray him. We may suppose that our LORD's reply to Judas, *Thou hast said*, was not spoken openly; for it does not appear that any, excepting John, understood that Judas was the man.

Our LORD's presenting Judas with a sop, was an act of kindness and friendship, calculated to recal his affection and gratitude; but he was not disposed to receive it



it as such: for the knowledge that his secret was discovered, filled him with rage and indignation; and Satan was ready to suggest, that Judas had best hasten the execution of it, lest it should be counteracted, and himself exposed to the resentment of Jesus and the other Apostles: Judas, therefore, arose in haste, that he might get Jesus apprehended immediately. Our LORD, to convince him that he knew his design, said, *What thou doest, do quickly*; thus intimating, that he now gave the traitor up to follow his own wicked inclinations, since neither warnings nor kindness could have any effect on him. This expression also implied, that our LORD was perfectly resigned to his approaching sufferings, and wished not to delay them.

We find that the other Apostles did not in the least suspect Judas, but supposed that he was either gone to purchase such provisions as they might want during the continuance of the festival; or that he had a commission from our LORD to distribute some private benefaction. If Judas had had any goodness remaining in his heart, he certainly must have been restrained by our LORD's *gentleness* from taking so cruel a step; but we find that he continued obdurate. When he was departed, our LORD informed his disciples that he should soon be glorified; and that the glory of the SUPREME BEING would be manifested in a most striking manner through him, so as to give a convincing proof of the union which subsisted between him and his Father. Then addressing his Apostles in the endearing terms of parental affection, he informed them, that in a few hours they would be deprived of his presence and conversation; but solicitous to do every thing that could tend to promote their ease and comfort in particular, and the temporal and future happiness of Christians in

all ages of his church, our LORD gave them, before his departure, a positive command to “*LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS HE HAD LOVED THEM.*” This might properly be called a *new commandment*; for though our LORD had shewed in his parable of the good Samaritan, that the law of Moses enjoined universal charity, yet no one had yet carried this virtue so far as he, the SON OF GOD, was then going to do, in laying down his life for the good of mankind.

To enforce still more the duty of *brotherly love*, our LORD appointed it to be a *sign* or *badge* to distinguish his disciples from the rest of the world: and the history of mankind evinces, that no people have been so remarkable for kindness to each other as Christians have. Let us, therefore, in obedience to our LORD's command, and in imitation of his blessed example, consider Christians of all denominations as our *brethren*; and as such let us, according to our abilities, interest ourselves for their welfare; instruct, counsel, comfort, and pray for them; vindicate them when they are accused, and compassionately bear with their failings. Thus CHRIST loved his disciples, and thus ought Christians to love their brethren. In one instance we cannot imitate the pattern of our blessed REDEEMER; for who amongst his followers is so perfect, as to have reason to think he can purchase salvation for another, by laying down his life for him, much less for the whole race of mankind? Neither does the world furnish occasions for practising this duty in the slightest degree; for if men are so hardened as to despise the mediation of CHRIST, no man can make atonement for him; and if he avails himself of his Redeemer's mediation, he will stand in need of no other.

From our LORD's behaviour to Judas we are instructed to avoid all bitter reproaches towards those who have injured us; to use our endeavours to disarm their malice; and, if we fail of success, to leave them to pursue their

own measures, without taking any steps which are inconsistent with our duty to God to restrain them; concluding that if our heavenly FATHER does not deliver us from our enemies, he will make them instrumental to our eternal happiness hereafter.

“ From our LORD’s love to St. John, we learn, that it is consistent with our Christian profession to form friendships with particular persons, provided their characters are such as justify our preference of them. The character of the Evangelist may serve to direct our choice. It appears from his writings and his conduct, that St. John was distinguished for his simplicity and singleness of heart, fervent piety, unbounded benevolence, unaffected modesty, humility, meekness, and gentleness of disposition *.”

These are the qualities which we ought to seek in a friend, and these virtues we must cultivate in our own hearts, as most likely to procure us a worthy friend, and as the only means to secure the friendship of our heavenly one.

SECTION XXV.

JESUS COMFORTS HIS DISCIPLES BEFORE HIS DEATH.

From John, Chap. xiv.

LET not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in me.

In my Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

* Bishop Porteus’s Sermons.

And whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know.

Thomas saith unto him, LORD, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?

JESUS saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, LORD, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

JESUS saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father!

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works sake.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but

but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more: but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also.

At that day ye shall know, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Judas said unto him, (not Iscariot) LORD, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

JESUS answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

He that loveth me not, keepeth not my saying: and the word which ye hear, is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.

These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I.

And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe.

Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.

But that the world may know that I love the Father; as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Having concluded the solemnity of celebrating the passover and ordaining the Eucharist, our LORD, before he quitted the guest-chamber* to go to the Mount of Olives, entertained his Apostles with a very affectionate discourse. No doubt their minds were greatly troubled at the thoughts of losing Him, and the dangers they should themselves be exposed to; but the gloomy prospect was cleared, when he taught them to look through the cloud of adversity, and take a mental view of their SAVIOUR in his heavenly state, preparing a place for them, and at length coming in person to introduce them to different degrees of happiness, proportioned to their faith and obedience.

In the beginning of this discourse, our LORD observed that his disciples had a source of consolation under their present trials in their belief of GOD, who, as an infinitely wise and good Governor, would certainly protect his faithful servants: but he intimated, that a mere belief in the existence and providence of the SUPREME BEING was not the whole of a Christian's faith;

* It is the opinion of several commentators that these discourses passed in this place, as they could not have been so conveniently heard by eleven persons whilst they were walking on the road. But it might be otherwise; however, this circumstance is immaterial, since the instruction conveyed to us by them is the same, let them have been delivered either in the guest-chamber or on the road.

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he was also required to believe in CHRIST, and this would be a farther antidote against the sorrows of the world. The nature of this belief, and the happy fruits of it, have been already explained.

Whether Thomas understood our LORD's answer to his question at this time is uncertain, but he did afterwards without doubt. It teaches us that the only way by which man can arrive to a certain knowledge of the will of GOD, and obtain eternal life, is through CHRIST, who revealed the truth, and proposed the terms of salvation. Neither can any one form proper conceptions of the *nature* and *attributes* of GOD, but from the manifestation which He has made of himself by his DIVINE WORD through CHRIST: so that our LORD might justly say, "*If ye had known me, ye would have known my FATHER also.*" Philip's enquiry shewed, that he had not yet entered into the spiritual meaning of our LORD's discourses; the answer he received was calculated not only for him, but for all persons who are not capable of comprehending figurative language, and is to be taken in a *literal* sense: we will therefore examine, how our LORD proved, that "*those who had seen him had seen the FATHER.*" Let us first consider, what he had at different times taught concerning the nature and attributes of GOD.

From various discourses of our LORD's we may collect, that the DEITY, whom he styled *his FATHER*, and *our HEAVENLY FATHER*, is a *Spirit*, whom no man hath seen at any time, the only true GOD, the first cause of life; that he is infinite in power, wisdom, goodness, compassion, mercy, justice, truth; that he loves virtue, and hates wickedness.

Let us now enquire, how it is possible for our SAVIOUR to *shew* the FATHER, or make the DEITY, who

was, in his nature, *invisible* to mortal eyes, visible to the senses. This was effected by the *union* of the DIVINE WORD with *human nature*. GOD, as a *Spirit*, was still *unseen*; but the MESSIAH shewed him forth to the world, so that men were *sensibly* convinced by the spiritual things CHRIST revealed, and the miracles he performed, that there certainly is such a perfect Being as he described; all mighty, all wise, infinite in goodness, compassion, and mercy; perfectly just, a searcher of all hearts, a friend to the good, and an enemy to the wicked. Our LORD also proved, by his *supernatural knowledge* and *mighty works*, that this great and glorious Being dwelt in him, was *essentially united* with him; so that those who saw him might be truly said to *see* GOD, as men see one another, who behold the *bodily substance*, but not the *spiritual nature*.

But our SAVIOUR required his disciples to believe, not only that he had, by his discourses and actions, *shewn them the* FATHER, and proved that he was actually *in himself*, but also, that they should believe HE *was in the* FATHER. On this occasion our LORD did not explain to his Apostles in what manner the GODHEAD who dwelt in him was ONE *with the* FATHER, nor *how* the *union subsisted* between the *Divine* and *human natures*; for these mysteries were too great for the consideration of persons whose minds were not yet enlightened by the HOLY GHOST: but the Apostles had farther revelations afterwards, by means of which they understood, and made known to the world, that the same BEING who had been, from the very *beginning*, the *visible governor of the universe*, whom St. John calls the WORD, took our nature on him, and appeared upon earth as the MESSIAH. These particulars being made known to them by the HOLY SPIRIT, claimed their ready belief, whe-
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ther they had faculties fully to comprehend them or not; and as we have no cause to doubt the veracity of the Apostles and Evangelists, or the authenticity of their writings, we ought to receive the mysterious doctrines they teach us, as objects of *faith*, though above the power of *human reason* to explain.

That the Apostles might not, from our LORD's assertion *that he and the FATHER were ONE*, be apprehensive, that when he left the world, the DEITY would withdraw himself, and leave them without a Divine Guide and Protector, He solemnly assured them, that when He should go to heaven, He would perform miracles by their hands, some of which would cause greater astonishment, and make more converts, than those wrought by Him while on earth; and, that whatever they should ask, if consistent with their ministry, he would certainly effect, that he might still continue to shew forth the power of the FATHER. Our LORD therefore exhorted them, if they had any love for him, to keep his commandments, and promised to entreat the FATHER to vouchsafe them another comforter, who should abide with them to the end of the world, and supply the want of his own personal presence.

We will defer a particular examination of our LORD's promise concerning the HOLY SPIRIT, till we can compare it with its accomplishment; when we shall be better able to conceive in what manner our LORD manifested himself to his Apostles, and not to the world, and other mysterious parts of this discourse; but in order to comprehend them, we must in the meantime acquire the necessary qualification; for if we are *worldly-minded*, and regardless of *heavenly things*, we shall never be able to understand them at all.

The *human nature* of the MESSIAH, was certainly in-

ferior to the GODHEAD. Our SAVIOUR might, therefore, with great propriety say, that “*the FATHER was greater than himself.*” In respect to the DIVINE NATURE of the Son of GOD, it is too sublime for the compass of the most enlarged minds. Let us therefore refer our enquiries to a future state, when, if we gain admittance into heaven, we shall behold the DEITY as HE IS, and shall be in no danger of committing errors respecting Him; and, in the mean while, let us rest assured, that if it had been necessary to our salvation, to understand the divine nature more fully, it would have been more clearly revealed.

Having finished this discourse, our LORD informed his disciples, that from this time he should converse but little with them, for he should soon be delivered up to the Roman power; to which he was resolved to submit, as he knew it was the will of THE FATHER that he should do so; but having something yet to do, he would stay no longer in the place where he had kept the passover, but desired his disciples to attend him, and departed, in order to go to the Mount of Olives.

Before our SAVIOUR left the world, he bequeathed PEACE to his Apostles, an inestimable legacy, bestowed with the utmost affection; and not confined to them only, but designed for all who loved and obeyed him. Let us then endeavour to obtain an interest in it, by laying aside anxious cares, envy, jealousy, malice, anger, resentment, and every tumultuous passion destructive of contentment and brotherly love; and let us, to the utmost of our ability, co-operate with our LORD, whose design in coming into the world was *to bring peace upon earth, good-will towards men*: and as we read that our LORD left the world in the very manner he predicted, let us believe that he will also return as he has promised,

and conduct to the mansions of bliss all who sincerely love him.

SECTION XXVI.

OUR LORD REPRESENTS HIMSELF UNDER THE EMBLEM
OF A VINE.

From John, Chap. xv.

I AM the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away : and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine : no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered ; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you : continue ye in my love.

If ye keep in my commandments, ye shall abide in my love : even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

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These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye should ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

These things I command you, that ye love one another.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

But all these these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.

He that hateth me, hateth my Father also,

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If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin : but now they have both seen, and heated both me and my Father.

But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This discourse is by some commentators supposed to have been delivered before our LORD left the guest-chamber ; others imagine that it passed when he was walking with his disciples towards the mount of Olives. The latter seems to be the most probable opinion ; for, as he was accustomed to borrow allusions from present objects, the sight of a vine might suggest this comparison : however this was, we must perceive that it was admirably adapted to the plain understandings of his disciples ; and calculated, at the same time, by its elegance, to attract the attention of persons of taste and judgment.

Our SAVIOUR might properly compare himself to a vine, and his FATHER to a husbandman, because it was GOD who had planted the MESSIAH in the world, and to GOD belongs the supreme government of the Christian church. The allusion is carried on with so much clearness, that we can scarcely fail of understanding it.

We may understand from the description of the husbandman's

bandman's proceedings, that every unprofitable member of CHRIST's church will be finally rejected of GOD, and that the best will be exercised with trials to purify their hearts. If we withdraw our faith and obedience from our REDEEMER, we must no longer expect to be favoured with the grace of GOD through His *beloved* SON; and without this grace we cannot bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Let us then adhere to our CHRISTIAN profession with sincerity and firmness, and we shall be enabled to practise its duties. We are here warned of the danger of apostasy, and encouraged to fidelity. If we depart from our faith, destruction will be our lot; if we continue obedient, all our prayers will be heard; for by using our best endeavours for the propagation of the gospel in the world, as far as our influence extends, and endeavouring to live holy lives, we glorify our heavenly Father, and prove ourselves true disciples of CHRIST. Our LORD testified his love for THE FATHER by acting in obedience to the Divine Will; he assures us, that he loves his disciples with the same constant affection that He is beloved by his FATHER; therefore it is our duty to do every thing in our power to secure the continuance of our LORD's love, which can only be done by an uniform obedience to his commands, as far as the infirmities of human nature will admit.

These things our LORD spake to his apostles, and through them to Christians in general, to *every branch*, in order to animate and fortify them against the temptations of life, that they might rejoice in the midst of tribulation, from the hope of eternal happiness.

Again our LORD repeated his commandment to his apostles, to *love one another*; conjuring them, by their obligations to him, to maintain mutual friendship and benevolence, such as he had shewn to mankind in general, and

and to them in particular; and was now going to prove, by laying down his life for the benefit of the world, which surely was the highest testimony of sincere affection that was possible for him as *Man* to give.

Our LORD observed to his apostles, that though they professed themselves his servants, he had treated them as intimate friends, communicating to them from time to time all things which the FATHER had revealed to him which it concerned their happiness and interest to be made acquainted with: from henceforth, therefore, he should call them by the endearing appellation of FRIENDS, so long as their fidelity to him and to each other remained. Yet they were not to suppose, that it was their own merit that procured them this honour; for he had chosen them without solicitation from the rest of his followers to be ministers of his gospel, and given them abilities to execute the office faithfully.

So essential to the discharge of the apostolic duty was brotherly love, that our SAVIOUR once more enjoined it as an indispensable obligation, particularly necessary to his apostles, because they would each be exposed to the enmity of wicked persons: he therefore exhorted them to unite firmly together, and not be discouraged by the hatred of the world, since it was what he had taught them to expect, and had met with himself. Our LORD then predicted the treatment his followers would shortly meet with from the Jews, on account of their attachment to him and to each other; and observed, how highly this wicked nation had offended God by opposing the MESSIAH; and added as a warning, to be uttered afterwards by his apostles to the Jews, that their pretending not to know him would be no excuse, because he had sufficiently proved himself to be the CHRIST: if he had not, indeed, they would, in this particular, have been clear from
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the guilt of rebellion against God and his beloved Son.

Our LORD then reminded his apostles, that the treatment he met with had been foretold by Moses and the prophets ; and he intimated, that he had another witness to produce in proof of his mission, namely, the HOLY SPIRIT, who would be a *Comforter* to them, and a powerful *advocate* in his cause ; and would encourage his disciples also to bear witness to the works he had performed, and the doctrines he had taught.

It is wonderful to remark the great condescension of the SON of GOD in assuming the tender relation of *friend* to men of the meanest rank and lowest abilities ; for the greatest part of his followers were poor illiterate fishermen. This circumstance should raise the hopes of the humble, and bring down the pride of the lofty. The only qualifications necessary to procure the friendship of our SAVIOUR, and through him of GOD the FATHER, is a sincere love of GOD, shewing itself in acts of obedience to his commands, and particularly in those kind and benevolent offices to our fellow-christians which are, in the very exercise of them, productive of the most rational delight : pleasures which riches cannot purchase for the sordid, learning cannot attain in the circle of human sciences, neither can power procure to the unfeeling heart ; yet are they within the reach of the poor, the illiterate, and the weak ; for every Christian has opportunities at one time or other of his life to contribute something to the happiness of others, and to shew forth the glory of GOD.

SECTION XXVII.

JESUS ENDEAVOURS TO RECONCILE HIS APOSTLES TO
THE THOUGHTS OF HIS REMOVAL, AND REPEATS THE
PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

From John, Chap. xvi.

THESE things have I spoken unto you, that ye should
not be offended.

They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the
time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that
he doth God service.

And these things will they do unto you, because they
have not known the Father, nor me.

But these things have I told you, that when the time
shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.
And these things I said unto you at the beginning, be-
cause I was with you.

But now I go my way to him that sent me, and none
of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow
hath filled your heart.

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; It is expedient for
you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter
will not come unto you; but, if I depart, I will send
him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin,
and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye
see me no more: Of judgment, because the prince of
this world is judged.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can-
not bear them now.

Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will
guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself;
but

but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak ; and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

All this that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

A little while, and ye shall not see me ; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while and ye shall see me : and, Because I go to the Father ?

They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while ? we cannot tell what he saith.

Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, a little while, and ye shall see me ?

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice : and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

A woman when she is in travel hath sorrow, because her hour is come ; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

And ye now therefore have sorrow ; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

And in that day ye shall ask me nothing : Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

These

These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs : the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

At that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you :

For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world : again I leave the world, and go to the Father.

His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

JESUS answered them, Do ye now believe ?

Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Having informed his apostles of the opposition they must expect to meet with, our LORD told them, his motive for giving them this intimation was, that they might not, when the storm should arise, be discouraged, and driven to renounce their Christian profession. It was certainly true, that they would be persecuted as he described to them ; and some of their persecutors would even affect to be led to the execution of such wicked deeds by zeal for the honour of God : but this would only prove their own ignorance in respect to the will of God,

GOD, and that they neither knew the FATHER nor the MESSIAH. Our LORD added, that the reason he had not taught them these things at the beginning of his ministry was, that he, being always present with them, could be referred to on all occasions which required his direction; but he chose to give them previous intimation now of the reception his gospel would meet with afterwards, that the remembrance of his predictions might be a confirmation of their faith when they saw the completion of it. Observing that the thoughts of his departure filled their hearts with sorrow, and that they did not at that time recollect he was going to heaven, he kindly reproved them for their forgetfulness, and assured them, it was more for their advantage that he should leave this world, than constantly abide in it: for unless he should appear before his FATHER as their *High Priest*, after having offered the sacrifice of his own life as an atonement for their sins, he could not convey for them the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, which was appointed to be given by him in his glorified state. And when this *Comforter*, this *heavenly Advocate*, the HOLY SPIRIT, should come, our Lord said, he would abundantly display the power of divine grace, not only in comforting them under all afflictions, but also by effectually pleading the Christian cause to the world through their ministry; and thus convict unbelievers of sin for not receiving the MESSIAH. The HOLY SPIRIT would also, our LORD said, enable them to prove the innocence and righteousness of his life, by arguments drawn from his ascension to heaven, and his acceptance with GOD the FATHER: and shew, by the success of the gospel, that CHRIST was invested with the power of executing judgment against Satan, who might be denominated *the prince of this world*, so long as the greatest part of mankind left their allegiance to GOD, and practised wickedness.

Our LORD added, that there were many other things of considerable moment requisite for them to know in respect to the establishment of the GOSPEL, which, as they were not yet prepared to receive them, he should wave at present; but they might depend on finding a faithful guide in the HOLY SPIRIT, who would come, not to reveal any private doctrine of his own, or to set up another spiritual kingdom, but to teach them what was farther necessary to be done for the propagation of the GOSPEL, and likewise to reveal to them things that would be hereafter; and by this mean the Holy Spirit would glorify CHRIST, since his operations would be directed to the farther illustration of what CHRIST had originally taught.

The things which were to be revealed to the apostles by the HOLY SPIRIT, were certainly such as related entirely to the Christian dispensation, and might justly be *appropriated* by the MESSIAH; for the gifts of the Spirit, viz. speaking with tongues, prophesying, &c. had all a reference to the Gospel, and were such as GOD, in his eternal wisdom, ordained that his beloved Son should bestow: therefore, the HOLY SPIRIT would dispense them agreeably to the direction of CHRIST, as CHRIST would act in conformity to the will of GOD THE FATHER.

To assure his disciples that he did not mean to be absent from them for ever, our LORD intimated, that though he should soon be taken from them, it would be but a little while before he should be with them again, because he should visibly *go to his FATHER*. Notwithstanding he had so often made use of the expression, "*go to his FATHER*," they had still such expectations of his establishing an earthly kingdom at his return, that they did not at the first apprehend his meaning; our LORD, therefore,

therefore, vouchsafed to explain to them what he meant by saying, "a little while, &c." He knew, that when he was taken from them they would weep and mourn, whilst his enemies would triumph; but that in a short time, when the hopes of his friends were at the lowest ebb, the scene would be changed, and they should rejoice in their turn; because they should not only see their LORD again, but be eye-witnesses of his ascension to his FATHER; which would give them true and lasting joy, such as the world, with all its train of persecutions, could not deprive them of; for it would mingle itself with their heaviest afflictions.

From the succeeding part of our LORD's discourse concerning "*praying to his Father in his name,*" we may learn in general, that he promised his disciples access to GOD by means of prayer; but informed them, that their petitions must be made in *his name*, because salvation was given for CHRIST's sake, and could not be claimed on account of their own righteousness.

When the HOLY GHOST descended afterwards upon the apostles, their minds were so enlightened, that had our LORD been personally present they would have stood in no need of proposing questions to him, in any thing that related to their ministry. Then they understood the nature of CHRIST's office as the MEDIATOR, which he here intimated. But this part of our LORD's discourse is involved in some obscurity; but we may understand it by observing in the writings of the apostles how they worshipped the FATHER in the name of the Son; and what our LORD himself teaches us should lead us to rejoice, that the prayers of such imperfect creatures as men find acceptance with the SUPREME BEING, and resolve to present our petitions in the way pointed out to us by his infinite

infinite love and compassion. Let us with joy and gratitude reflect, that though our Redeemer is removed from earth, he dwelleth in heaven to make intercession for us. His words, "*I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you,*" imply, that he will not pray for each individual in *his stead*; yet we may assure ourselves, that whoever prays with true faith and devotion will have the benefit of our SAVIOUR'S intercession. We may, therefore, comfort ourselves, amidst the tribulations of this world, with the thoughts that *they* will be of short duration; but the joys that are prepared for the faithful, eternal. Let us frequently read these inestimable discourses of our LORD, in order to animate our love for him and our fellow-creatures.

" * And since the *Captain of our Salvation* has overcome the world, and disarmed death of its power, let us seek that peace which he has established, and press on with a cheerful assurance, that the least of his followers shall share in the honours and benefits of his victory."

SECTION XXVIII.

OUR LORD PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES.

From John, Chap. xvii.

THESE words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

* Doddridge's Family Expositor.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent.

I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world : thine they were, and thou gavest them me : and they have kept thy word.

Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee.

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me ; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

I pray for them : I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name : those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition ; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray

I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word:

That they also may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them: that they may be one, even as we are one.

I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“ In the last section we beheld * our LORD, like a dying father in the midst of his family, mingling consolation with his last instructions. When he had ended his discourse to them, *he lifted up his eyes to heaven*, and began that solemn prayer of intercession, which closed his ministry. He saw his mission on the point of being accomplished. He had the full prospect before him of all that he was about to suffer. Father! the hour is come. This was the hour in which CHRIST was glorified.” The sublime prayer he at this time offered up deserves our most serious examination, since it shews the dignity of our LORD’s character, the purport of his mission, and his love for the apostles in particular, and his church in general. It is perfectly suitable to the idea of a MEDIATOR, who had a view both to the glory of GOD and the instruction of mankind; for each petition of it reflected honour on the SUPREME BEING, and taught his disciples some important truth, therefore he offered it up publicly: and it was recorded by the Evangelist, that all future Christians might know *what* their Redeemer was, *why* he came into the world, how entirely he submitted to the Divine will, and how fervently he loves all those who sincerely profess his holy religion.

Our LORD first prayed for *himself*, but for no private end; his motive for desiring glory was, that he might by his death, resurrection, and ascension, accomplish the Divine purposes respecting the salvation of mankind. He mentioned his performance of his part of the Covenant which subsisted between him *as the MESSIAH*, and GOD, that his disciples might understand the con-

* See Dr. Blair’s Sermon on the Death of CHRIST, in Vol. I.

ditions of it; namely, that he should conform his will to the will of GOD: and GOD, on his part, gave him power over all mankind, to dispense eternal life to every one who should believe and confess that He was the only true GOD, and his Son JESUS CHRIST the MESSIAH.

In his hour of trial our LORD reflected, with unutterable pleasure, that he had faithfully discharged the trust reposed in him, and by his doctrines and ministry glorified GOD on earth.

His petition, "*And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was,*" relates to the pre-existence of the DIVINE WORD, who, from this text we understand, had eternal glory with the Father. Of this glory we can form no perfect idea, any more than we can of the union of the Divine and human natures; but from the *Old Testament* we learn (as has been already shewn,) that there was a Being who appeared from the beginning of the world as the LORD, with all the marks of omnipotence, though not in the fulness of Divine Majesty: and St. John declared, that this LORD, or the WORD, who was really *one with GOD*, and neither a *separate Deity*, nor a *Creature*, took our nature upon him, and dwelt on earth. Our SAVIOUR proved himself to be more than *Man*, and asserted, that his Divine nature was *one with the FATHER*: and it seems to have been with a view of establishing the belief of this mystery, that he publicly prayed THE FATHER to glorify him with the heavenly glory, which, as the WORD, he originally possessed with Him before the creation of the world.

By *manifesting the name of his FATHER*, our LORD may be understood to mean, that he had given clearer

notions respecting the nature and attributes of the SUPREME BEING than mankind had before received.

The men who were given him out of the world, as attendants on his ministry, were the apostles : these, we may judge from their readiness to receive the Gospel, were men of religious dispositions, who were GOD's *servants* before they were CHRIST's *apostles*. To them our LORD particularly revealed the will of GOD, because they received his doctrine as the word of GOD, and believed what he declared concerning his own *nature* and *office*. To testify his love for his apostles, our LORD did not only include them in a prayer for the world in general, but even gave them a distinguished preference to the rest of his disciples.

Though his FATHER had given the apostles to our LORD as members of his mediatorial kingdom, they were still the servants of GOD ; for their duty and allegiance to the MESSIAH had a constant reference to the union which subsisted between GOD THE FATHER and CHRIST.

By the effect which his doctrine had on their lives and conversations, and the testimony they bore to him, our LORD was glorified in his apostles.

The son of perdition was Judas Iscariot ; he was lost through his own vices, and not by any neglect of his Divine Master. JESUS knew from the beginning that he would betray him, but admitted him into his society, as it was the will of the FATHER that he should do so, and also to do the utmost for his reformation. If Judas was so wicked with such advantages for goodness, he would undoubtedly have been sordid and impious in any situation ; and his example justified GOD in leaving very bad people to themselves, since it is evident, that there are some persons whom nothing will reform.

How

How admirably did our LORD at once express his own good will, and teach his disciples what kind of blessings they should themselves pray for !

By imploring THE FATHER to give them joy in the discharge of their duty, such as he himself felt, our LORD taught his disciples to fortify their minds against the hatred of the world ; that, instead of wishing for death, they might be able patiently to endure life, however persecuted. His petition to THE FATHER, that he would sanctify the apostles with the HOLY SPIRIT, as he had promised, instructed them always to consider themselves as separated from the world for the peculiar service of GOD ; and to remember, that they were sent by their LORD to preach for the same purpose, as he had been before sent by his FATHER. That the apostles might not forget to be thankful for their own salvation whilst they were promoting that of others, they were reminded, that it was for their sakes, as well as for mankind in general, CHRIST undertook his ministry ; and that the doctrine which he delivered to them was the TRUTH.

Our LORD having by this excellent prayer pointed out to his apostles what was particularly necessary for them to believe and teach, and also besought his FATHER to give them grace to practise it, offered up his intercession in behalf of all who should at any time believe on him ; that as they through faith and Divine grace were united to GOD and CHRIST, they might through love and good works be united to each other ; and by means of their union, confirm men in the belief of his mission, and the Divine origin of his religion.

It appears in the beginning of his prayer, that our LORD sought no glory separate from GOD : in the concluding part he promises, that whatever honour shall be put upon his *human nature*, his faithful followers

shall be partakers of it ; that GOD, the MESSIAH, and all true Christians, may form a spiritual kingdom on earth, and an eternal one in heaven.

Our LORD once more declared, that he had pre-existence with the FATHER before the foundation of the world. The conclusion of this excellent prayer was a solemn confirmation to his apostles, that what he had formerly taught them concerning GOD was true ; accompanied with a promise, that he would afford them farther knowledge of the perfections and will of GOD ; that through the love of the FATHER to himself, his love for his disciples, and theirs for him, a spiritual intercourse might be preserved when his bodily presence was removed. Let us frequently and diligently meditate on this excellent prayer, and may Divine grace make it effectual to our benefit !

SECTION. XXIX.

PETER'S CONFIDENCE.

Matt. Chap. xxvi.—John, xiii.—Luke, xxii.

AND when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

Then saith JESUS unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night : for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.

But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.

Simon Peter said unto him, LORD, Whither goest thou ? JESUS answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now ; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.

Peter

Peter said unto him, LORD, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake, I am ready to go with thee both to prison and to death.

JESUS answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.

Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.

And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked you any thing? And they said, Nothing.

Then said he unto them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take it; and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me. And he was reckoned among the transgressors: for the things concerning me have an end.

And they said, LORD, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the beginning of this section our LORD seems to allude to a passage in the prophecy of Zechariah, see Zech. ch. xiii. *Simon Peter* certainly had a very zealous attachment to his Divine Master, but he forgot that the infirmities of human nature make all men liable to temptations, which they cannot overcome by *their own strength*, unassisted by *Divine grace*. Our LORD informed *Peter*, that he would shortly be exposed to such a temptation as he could form no idea of at present,

when *Satan*, the great enemy of souls, would endeavour to take advantage of him, by tempting him to apostatize; but that he, foreseeing this danger, had already prayed to his FATHER, that Peter's faith might not sink under a trial so severe.

Our LORD then exhorted Peter to retain ever afterwards a constant remembrance of the mercy vouchsafed to him, and to endeavour as much as possible, to engage all, over whom he should have any influence, to be steady to the Christian cause.

Peter, still confident of his own strength, expressed himself with great eagerness and warmth; on which our LORD assured him, that he knew not his own heart: for, so far from following him to prison and to death, he would shortly disclaim all connexion with him.

In order to strengthen the faith of his apostles, our LORD appealed to their own experience, whether they had, when he sent them forth, been in want of any thing necessary for the support of life? To which they replied, that they had not. He told them, that the case would be altered: for, instead of finding in every place the hearts of strangers disposed to receive them, they would be exposed to great sufferings and dangers in the prosecution of their ministry: it was, therefore, necessary that they should be well armed and furnished for the conflicting scenes they would be engaged in; for the time was approaching, when *Isaiah's* prediction, that "*he shall pour out his soul unto death, and be numbered with the transgressors,*" should be fulfilled, by his being executed as a malefactor, and all that was predicted concerning him should suddenly be accomplished.

From our LORD's expression, "*He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one,*" his disciples supposed,

posed, that he wished them to provide each man his weapon, in order to defend *him* against his pursuers: but he shewed that he had no such desire, by saying, that *two* swords, which were all they had among *eleven* of them, were sufficient. His words seem to intimate, that during the time of his *sufferings*, and *absence from them*, they should be left to provide for their own necessities, by *natural* means; and were not to depend either on miracles, or the benevolence of others, for their support; and that in case they were attacked to the *hazard* of their *lives*, they might defend themselves as their own *natural courage* should suggest. If this was our LORD's meaning, we may infer from the text of Scripture we are considering, that there are occasions, on which it is not only *lawful*, but *expedient*, for *Christians* to have recourse to *arms*. Those occasions we may judge to be, when they have no other means of preserving the lives of themselves or families; when the country they inhabit is in danger of invasion; or when an open attempt is made to extirpate *Christianity* and introduce *heathenism*.

Our LORD certainly never meant that his *holy religion*, whose principal object was, "PEACE and GOOD-WILL to men," should be propagated by *fire* and *sword*: or that Christians should engage in *civil wars* to maintain *different modes* of FAITH. On the contrary, the Apostles were expressly commanded by our LORD himself, not to *resist* the persecutions of their *countrymen* the Jews, by *violent* methods, but to flee from city to city to *avoid* them. And the HOLY SPIRIT afterwards taught the Apostles, to consider themselves as engaged in a *spiritual warfare*, in which they were to make use of none but *spiritual armour* *.

* Ephes. vi. 14, 16, 17.

SECTION XXX.

OUR LORD'S AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

*From John, Chap. xviii.—Matt. xxvi.—Luke, xxii.—
Mark, xiv.*

WHEN JESUS had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.

Then cometh JESUS with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

And he took with him Peter, and James, and John, and began to be sorrowful, and very heavy.

Then said he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.

And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed,

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.

And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.

And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?

Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.

And

And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words.

And when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer him.

And he cometh a third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

And Judas also which betrayed him, knew the place; for JESUS oft times resorted thither with his disciples.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Cedron or Kedron was, as its name signified, a dark and shady vale, between Jerusalem and the mount of Olives; through it ran a little brook, which took its name from the place. Gethsemane was a pleasant fertile garden. It is probable, that our LORD chose this secret retirement, not only to avoid the interruption he might meet with in the city, but also to prevent a tumult when he was apprehended. The garden, it is supposed, belonged to one of his friends; for it seems he had been used to retire to it.

Having offered up his intercession for his apostles, and warned them of what they were to expect, our LORD prepared himself for the dreadful trial which was just at hand; and being firmly resolved to submit to the Divine will, he took three of his apostles with him as witnesses of his behaviour, that they might learn from his example the duty of resignation, and teach it to the world.

The violent perturbation of mind which our LORD expressed,

expressed, seems to have arisen from the near prospect of his death, and the excruciating torments which would attend it. From such agonies it was natural for *human nature* to shrink; and our LORD's being subject to them, proved that he was *perfect man*. On many occasions, he had shewn the utmost compassion for the sorrows of others; can we then wonder that he should feel for himself, when he had a view of every circumstance of indignity and cruelty that would be inflicted on him? The wonder is, that he should *willingly* submit to them. But notwithstanding CHRIST was desirous to avoid pain, yet he was more desirous of performing the will of his FATHER. It appears from this instance, that our LORD had, like other men, freedom of will. It likewise appears, that he was perfectly acquainted with the will of GOD, which no mere man ever was. This knowledge, as we may judge from other parts of Scripture, was communicated to his soul by the DIVINE WORD, who was united with his human nature, and which never left him; though the influence of the GODHEAD was not exerted so as to controul his will, and prevent those natural emotions of which the human soul is susceptible.

On this occasion, the love of GOD to mankind was eminently displayed. He permitted his *beloved* SON to suffer the pains of humanity, to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, that he might not be severe to the ignorant and erroneous, but by his obedience purchase salvation for mankind. Our SAVIOUR's love for us, was also testified in the most endearing manner. He resolved to practise in its full extent the duty of resignation to the Divine will, in order to redeem us.

* If we take a review of our LORD's life, we shall

* See an excellent Sermon by Dr. Jortin on this subject.

find,

find, that not only in the present instance, but in all the calamities he endured, he practised the virtue of *resignation*. He willingly and patiently submitted to poverty, to procure for us eternal riches. He endured weariness, he exposed himself to the inclemency of the weather, he suffered hunger and thirst, he submitted to a variety of contradictions, misapprehensions, and provocations, that would have raised the anger of the meekest man that ever lived upon earth; and restrained resentment, even when the greatest act of treachery and ingratitude that can be conceived was practised against him. Though zealous at all times for the honour of THE FATHER, never did he express indignation for any private injuries or affronts offered to himself; but, in spite of the ill-treatment he met with, continued his kind endeavours to win sinners over to obedience, and save them from ruin. When injured in his reputation, and exposed to the most malicious calumny, he never lost his patience, but forgave his enemies, and continued to go about doing good.

Though from the infirmity of human nature our LORD was cast down at the foresight of the approaching death he was to suffer, and had frequent conflicts with himself, wishing to be saved from the hour of pain and anguish, yet he resolved to submit to the will of GOD: and when he knew that the traitor Judas, and the soldiers who were to apprehend him, were gone forth from the palace of the High Priest; though he was seized with extreme dejection, fear, horror, and consternation, no impatient word fell from his mouth, nothing that did not express a perfect submission to the will of GOD: neither did he discover the least impatience or peevishness, when his apostles, instead of watching with him, feel asleep.

Such was the meek and resigned conduct of our
LORD,

LORD, under trials as many and as great as can well be conceived. Let us, then, endeavour, as much as possible, to copy it. To suffer in some degree is unavoidable, for it is the lot of humanity; through such trials we must all expect to pass: we *cannot*, and our LORD *would* not, escape them. Christianity will not free us from the calamities and inconveniences of life; but it will enable us to bear them by the hopes of immortality, and teach us how to support ourselves under them by the example of our SAVIOUR.

Let us, also, like our blessed LORD, in the hour of affliction, “*arise and pray,*” lest we enter into temptation; and resign ourselves to the will of GOD in all things, looking forward to the joy, which is set before us. Be our lot ever so severe, let us keep from despair; for we learn from our SAVIOUR’s agony *, “that a state of the sharpest sufferings was consistent with the love of GOD; and that the most perfect innocence, and the brightest prospect of future glory, could not overcome the natural horror of them. He that fears death, and trembles at the approach of it, and yet had rather die again than sin once, hath not sinned in his fear; for CHRIST hath hallowed it, and the infirmity of human nature is his excuse.”

We are told, that while our LORD prayed, his agony was so great, that *his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground*. Whether real blood came through the pores of his skin does not clearly appear from the text, but it might be so; for ancient authors relate other instances of persons, under extreme perturbation of mind, sweating blood. This at least is certain that his body, as well as his soul, was greatly affected, and his sweat ran off with uncommon violence.

* Bishop Tillotson’s Sermons.

SECTION XXXI.

THE APPREHENDING OF JESUS.

*From Mark, Chap. xiv.—John, xviii.—Luke, xxii.—
Matt. xxvi.*

AND he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners*.

Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand.

And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.

Judas then having received a band of men, and officers from the chief priests, and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns, and torches, and weapons.

And Judas went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also which betrayed him, stood with them.

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.

* The verses which ended the last section are purposely repeated here; because they could not be well disjoined from this.

JESUS answered, I have told you that I am he. If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way :

That the saying might be fulfilled which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me, have I lost none.

When they which were about him, saw what would follow, they said unto him, LORD, shall we smite with the sword ?

Then Simon Peter having a sword, drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.

Then said JESUS unto Peter, Put up again thy sword into his place : for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword.

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ?

But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?

The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it ?

Then the band, and the captain, and officers of the Jews, took JESUS, and bound him.

And JESUS answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched the ear of Malchus, and healed him.

Then JESUS said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves ?

When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me : but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

All this has been done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled,

And

And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him.

And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was related in the last section, that when our LORD retired into the garden at Gethsemane, he exhorted the three Apostles who attended him, to watch and pray, lest they entered into temptation; but they fell asleep. It certainly was their duty to watch with their Master, when his life was in such imminent danger, and to endeavour to comfort him when they beheld him so greatly distressed. Had they watched in this manner, their own minds would have been better prepared against the trials and temptations to which they themselves were to be exposed: but as our LORD knew that it was through infirmity, and not for want of affection for him, that they fell asleep, he kindly excused it; and that they might see enough of his behaviour to enable them to bear testimony to it, and learn the duty of resignation, he repeatedly awakened them.

At the close of this affecting scene, our LORD told his Apostles, that they might *now sleep on and take their rest*; the design for which they were separated from the other Apostles being so far accomplished, there was no occasion for them to watch with him.

Though the cup of DEATH was not removed, yet our LORD's prayer was heard, and consolation granted him; the violent perturbation which had been raised in his soul by the view of his approaching sufferings, was succeeded by a perfect calmness and serenity. Perhaps the ministering angel was sent by THE FATHER, to recall to our LORD's mind the necessity of his death, and

to confirm the assurance he had before received, that his *human nature* would certainly be a partaker of that glory which the DIVINE WORD had from all eternity : for we may judge from other passages of Scripture, that, on extraordinary occasions, when our LORD's soul was exposed to unusual temptations, and the operations of the DIVINE NATURE seem to have been for an instant suspended, he received evident proofs of the peculiar favour and protection of GOD by means of his *outward senses* ; particularly in the wilderness, after the Devil had tempted him to doubt whether he were the SON of GOD, when angels came and ministered unto him as such. As our LORD at that time willingly resolved to submit to a state of poverty, he as willingly determined in the garden of Gethsemane patiently to endure the cross, with all its attendant evils ; accordingly he went forth with the utmost composure to meet the traitor, who was attended by a band of Roman soldiers, with their captain, and some Jewish officers belonging to the temple guard : nay, some of the members of the Sanhedrim, hurried on by malice and rage, mixed with a low rabble, and came in the dead of the night, to see that their infamous design was effectually executed.

The moon was then at the full ; yet they brought lanterns and torches with them, that the guards might the better see to use their arms in case of opposition, or discover JESUS if he should hide himself in any private recess. It appears, from the signal which Judas gave, that our LORD permitted his Apostles, according to the Jewish custom, to salute him, when he returned to them after having been any time absent. Though the traitor approached with all the marks of duty and friendship, his perfidious purposes were known to his Master ; who, instead of reproaching him, gently reminded him of the
dignity

dignity of the person he was about to betray. Judas could not be ignorant, that our LORD had frequently declared himself to be the MESSIAH; and by the injunction he gave to the guards to hold their prisoner fast, we may judge, that he expected Jesus to effect his escape in some wonderful way.

How admirable was our LORD's conduct on this trying occasion! not a word passed his lips that was not perfectly consistent with the dignity of the *Son of God*, and the submission of the *Son of Man*. One would have supposed, that when the guards, who attempted to seize him, fell backwards on his saying, I AM HE, the members of the Sanhedrim would have recollected the instance of the companies who were sent to seize the Prophet Elijah, and would have perceived that the consternation of these men was likewise effected by a divine influence, but they were invincibly obdurate.

What tenderness did our LORD discover towards those who had so lately neglected him (sleeping when he was in such extreme agony)! He would not suffer them to be terrified, even by a short imprisonment, but capitulated with his prosecutors for the safety of his disciples before he would resign himself into their hands: and when Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, he over-ruled the resentment of his enemies, who, we may suppose, would otherwise have seized him; but he did not encourage his followers in acts of violence; on the contrary, forewarned them, "that drawing the sword in the cause of their religion, or against the governors of the land, would involve the good and bad, the persecuted and the persecutors, in undistinguished destruction; and desired Peter to put up his sword, since, were it the will of his FATHER that he should escape, he

he would, at his entreaty, send a celestial army* to destroy his persecutors; and that he stood in no need of the feeble assistance of his disciples. But since he knew it was the irrevocable will of GOD THE FATHER that he should die, and that the prophecies would not be fulfilled, unless he submitted to bear the portion of affliction allotted for him, he would no longer pray to be delivered from death; on the contrary, he willingly resigned himself to it.

Our LORD's behaviour, under the dreadful conflict he endured, afforded a very useful lesson to his disciples in particular, teaching them that they were not required to court persecution, but to pray against it with perseverance and earnestness, though, at the same time, with the most entire resignation. When he had surrendered himself, his persecutors immediately proceeded to bind him, in order to prevent his escape. We may suppose, that Malchus, enraged at the wound he had received from Peter, was one of the first to seize JESUS; and, it is probable, was about to bind his hands; but he prevented him, that he might first heal him with a touch. By this miracle, our LORD not only gave an instance of unparalleled compassion and generosity, but also obviated the reflections and censures which the rashness of Peter might otherwise have occasioned.

How extremely reasonable was our LORD's expostulation with the chief priests and captains of the temple guard! For what pretence could they have for coming against him as a *robber*, who would make a desperate resistance? He reminded them of their not seizing him

* A Roman legion is supposed to have consisted at that time of 6000 men. How dreadful then must an army of twelve legions of angels have appeared! for we read, that *one* of them slew 185,000 of the Assyrians in the camp of Sennâcherib.—See 2 Kings, xix. 35.

in the temple, and intimated, by saying it was now their hour and the power of darkness, that they had hitherto been secretly restrained by divine power, which could as easily have been exerted at the time; but that he was *willing* to resign himself into their hands, that the prophecies might be fulfilled.

The behaviour of our LORD's disciples when he was bound, shews how necessary was his admonition, *Watch and pray*, that ye enter not into temptation: for want of this preparative, their spirits were struck with consternation; they forgot their divine Master's repeated predictions concerning himself, and the solemn protestations they had lately made, that they would never leave him nor forsake him; and now thought only of providing for their own safety, by a flight disgraceful to their profession. Our LORD did not remind them of the inconsistency of their behaviour, but let them depart, that Christians might learn from this instance, not to depend too confidently on the friendship even of the best men.

The young man who fled away naked, is supposed to have been one who lodged in a house near the garden, and was awakened by the noise of the tumult: having an affection for our LORD, and apprehending him to be in danger, he only wrapped his under garment loosely about him, which he threw off when he found himself seized upon.

SECTION XXXII.

JESUS CARRIED BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST.—PETER
DENIES HIM.

*From John, Chap. xviii.—Matt. xxvi.—Mark, xiv.—
Luke, xxii.*

Now Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest (for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, who was the high priest that year).

Now Caiaphas was he who gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.

And they that had laid hold on Jesus, led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. That disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest.

But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.

Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.

And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals (for it was cold), and they warmed themselves; and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.

And when he was gone out into the porch, another
maid

maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.

And when the maid saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth.

But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew.

And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them.

And he denied it again. And a little after they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto.

But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the cock crew the second time.

And the LORD turned, and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the LORD, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice; and he went out and wept bitterly.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears from Josephus, that Annas, whom he calls Ananus, had been High-Priest before his son-in-law Caiaphas; and it was by his interest that Caiaphas, who married his daughter, and had probably officiated as his deputy, had obtained that dignity: so that though Annas had resigned that office himself, yet the people paid so much regard to his experience, that they brought Jesus first to him, who no doubt took all necessary care to prepare Caiaphas for receiving him, as he could not but know this was a critical juncture.

Notwithstanding it was the dead of the night, all

the members of the Sanhedrim assembled together with their proper officers, on a summons from Caiaphas, and were waiting for JESUS when he was brought before them.

Simon Peter had, with the rest of the disciples, at first forsaken his LORD; but he soon recollected himself, and resolved to return; as did another apostle, supposed to be John, being anxious to see the event, and they shortly overtook the multitude. Our LORD was taken into an inner room, in order to be examined. John, by some means with which we are not acquainted, was known to the High Priest, and was admitted into the palace without any objection: but Peter having no interest was obliged to wait without till his companion gained admittance for him. While the Council were examining JESUS, Peter sat down among the servants, thinking to remain there undiscovered; but when he found that he was suspected, he suffered his fear to get the better of his gratitude and affection, and meanly denied his LORD and Master, calling GOD to witness that he did not even know him. Thus did this disciple, who had given the warmest assurances of constant attachment, sink into a degree of baseness next to that of the traitor Judas; for he denied CHRIST before *men*, when he ought particularly to have confessed him, and to have offered himself as a *witness* of his innocence. What a striking instance of human frailty and imperfection was this! for there is no doubt but that *Peter*, when he made his former professions, spake from his heart*; as he had the greatest share of natural courage and resolution of any of the Apostles, and the fullest persuasion of faith.

* See Bishop Sherlock's Sermons, from whence these reflections on St. Peter's example are extracted.

But *natural courage* is not the true source of fortitude in *spiritual trials*; and we may learn from *Peter's* example, that confidence and presumption are very unpromising signs of steadfastness and perseverance in religion. The first principles of true religion are *a fear of God and mistrust of ourselves*, which will not easily insinuate into a mind that is full of self-sufficiency. A sincere trust in *God*, and perfect submission to the divine will, enable men not only to act with zeal, but to bear the disappointments of life with unshaken firmness of mind: but those who set out on their own bottom soon turn back: and it is in vain for any to promise themselves a superiority under such trials and temptations, unless they lay a right foundation, by imploring the aid of *God's HOLY SPIRIT*.

We are also taught by *Peter's* example, what little reason there is to promise ourselves success against temptations which are of our own seeking. *Peter* had warning given him, and was told by *ONE* whose word he might have taken, but he was not able to undergo the trial he seemed so much to despise: but try he would, and he learnt to know his own weakness by his miscarriage.

God knows our strength better than we ourselves do; and as he has warned us to fly the occasions of sin, it is presumptuous to think ourselves able to resist them. When therefore we court the dangers and temptations which the scriptures warn us to flee from, we have no pretence to expect support from *CHRIST* in our undertaking. But while we are doing the work of our heavenly Father, we shall assuredly meet with proper encouragement, and we are authorised by *God's* promises to expect the aid of the *HOLY SPIRIT*.

Peter's example likewise teaches us, how great the
H 2 advantages

advantages of regular and habitual holiness are. Good Christians, though they may fall like other men through passion or presumption, or other infirmities, yet their way to repentance is more open and easy; their minds not being hardened by sin, are awakened by the gentlest calls, and the sense of virtue revives in them upon the first suggestions of conscience. St. Peter fell, and his fall was very shameful; but his repentance was as remarkable as his fall. While he was in the height of his rage for being suspected to be a disciple of CHRIST's, whilst he was abjuring him with oaths and imprecations, one look of our LORD laid all the storm, and melted him into the tears and sorrows of repentance. The same moment saw him the most audacious sinner, and the most humble penitent. There was no need of terrifying judgments to awaken his mind to a sense of his iniquity; the eye of his LORD was a sufficient rebuke; it struck him with a sorrow not to be dissembled; and he went out, and wept bitterly.

How different were the calls to repentance, which the Jews had even in our SAVIOUR's life-time, yet how different their success? Every man may *sin*, but those only will *repent* who sincerely endeavour after righteousness. A good man may be mistaken, surprised, misled; but the first return of thought, the first interval he has of cool reason and reflection, shews him his error, and hastens his return to the obedience of holiness. But the wicked, as they advance in iniquity, do more and more subdue their conscience, till even repentance itself becomes impossible.

SECTION XXXIII.

JESUS EXAMINED AT THE PALACE OF CAIAPHAS.

From John, Chap. xviii.

THE high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.

JESUS answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing.

Why asketh thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers who stood by, struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?

JESUS answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The proceedings against our blessed LORD were contrary to all law and equity. He was seized as a criminal, though guilty of no crime*. He was brought to the tribunal of justice, though no one had any thing to lay to his charge. The judge was his prosecutor, and he was unjustly required to be his own accuser. The High Priest, willing to cover the private malice of himself, and the other members of the Sanhedrim, under a pretence of zeal for the public good, examined our

* See Henry's Annotations.

LORD concerning his disciples and his doctrine, in hopes of finding, from his own mouth, cause to represent him as dangerous either to the Jewish church, or the Roman government, and so have him convicted of heresy or sedition. How calm and rational was his reply! Of his doctrine he said nothing, for he knew they were not disposed to edify by it; and if it was *right*, he had the same privilege with other teachers of communicating it to the world: and though his disciples had forsaken him, he would not expose them to the malice of the Sanhedrim, but referred his persecutors to those who had heard his preaching, as, according to the rules of their own court in capital cases, they ought to have given notice by the public crier, in his presence, for all persons who could bear testimony to his innocence, to appear, before they proceeded to put him to death*. This our **LORD** had a particular right to demand, as he had been candid and open in the publication of the Gospel; but they resolved, agreeably to the prophet's prediction, *by oppressive judgment to cut him off, and his manner of life none would declare*†; for all were intimidated by the fear of the power of the Council.

The crime which the Sanhedrim by law was to enquire into, was the clandestine spreading of dangerous doctrine, and secretly enticing to the worship of strange gods‡. From this our **LORD** fully vindicated himself, shewing, that he did not deliver things ambiguously like the heathen oracles, but explained himself fully; his reproofs were free and bold, and his testimonies express, against the corruptions of the age. He spake to the world, to all who were willing to hear him; he feared not the censures of a mixed multitude, neither

* See Bishop Louth's notes to the liiid of Isaiah. † Isaiah, liii.

‡ Deut. xiii. 6.

did he withhold knowledge from any, and his doctrines were always uniform.

The man who reprov'd our LORD in so violent a manner and had presumed to strike him, undoubtedly meant to gain the favour of the High Priest. With what wonderful meekness did our SAVIOUR bear this affront ! He could by his miraculous power have struck dumb the impious tongue of him who uttered it, or have withered the hand that was lifted up against him ; but he chose to teach men not to revenge themselves, nor render railing for railing ; but with the innocency of the dove to bear injuries, even when they might appeal to the magistrate ; and with the wisdom of the serpent, shew the injustice of them.

It is observable, that our LORD did not, when he was struck, *turn the other cheek* ; which shews, that his direction to do so in his Sermon on the Mount, was not to be understood literally. By comparing his precepts with his conduct we learn, that on such occasions we must not be our own avengers, nor judge in our own cause. We must rather receive than give the second blow which makes the quarrel. We must accommodate ourselves to the evils of a suffering state with patience, and if any indignity is done us, prepare ourselves to receive another, rather than indulge a revengeful temper.

SECTION XXXIV.

JESUS EXAMINED AND CONDEMNED BY THE
SANHEDRIM.

From Luke, Chap. xxii.—Matt. xxvii.

AND as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, and the chief priests and the scribes came together, and led him into the Council.

H 4

Now

Now the chief priests and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus to put him to death,

But found none : yet, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

But neither so did their witness agree together.

And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing ? what is it which these witness against thee ? But Jesus held his peace.

And the scribes and elders asked him, saying, Art thou the CHRIST ? tell us. And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe.

And if I also ask you, you will not answer me, nor let me go.

Hereafter shall the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God ? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the CHRIST the Son of God ?

JESUS saith unto him, Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy ; what further need have we of witnesses ? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy, What think ye ?

And they said, What need we any further witnesses ? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth.

He

He is deserving of death. And they all condemned him to be guilty of death.

And the men that held Jesus, mocked him, and spit in his face, and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands,

Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou CHRIST, Who is he that smote thee?

And many other things blasphemously spake they against him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When our LORD's enemies found they could bring no legal accusation against him, they resolved to assemble the whole Council at break of day in the chamber where they used to sit for public business; they therefore removed from the house of Caiaphas, taking their prisoner with them: and it seems to have been at this time, that JESUS found Peter denying him, and gave him that *significant look* which had so happy an effect. When arrived at the council-chamber, the High Priest and Council, finding that none offered themselves willingly to accuse him, gave intimation, that they would receive testimony even from the most infamous of mankind; persons who, for the sake of a bribe, would give solemn attestation to the most atrocious falsehood. At length they found two, who they thought would answer their purpose. These suborned witnesses laid hold of an expression, which our LORD had used some time before, alluding to his resurrection from the dead; and by the alteration of a few words they insinuated, that he was an enemy to the Temple, and sought for its destruction, which was deemed equal to *blasphemy*: for when the

Jews abandoned other idols, they made a perfect *idol* of the *House of the LORD*. Our SAVIOUR's words, *Destroy YE this temple, and in three days I will rebuild it*, plainly intimated, that he spake of a temple which *his enemies* would seek to destroy. Thus did these false witnesses endeavour to convict him, but failed in their attempt, as they differed in their evidence; and could not, if they had agreed, have proved any capital crime against him. Our LORD shewed no regard to their false and frivolous accusation. The High Priest, surprised at his silence, called upon him to make his defence; but JESUS, knowing how vain it would be for him to plead for himself in so unrighteous a court, the members of which were determined to condemn him, made no reply. He would not deny the charge, because he was willing to submit to the sentence; otherwise, he could as easily have put them to silence now, as he had done formerly.

Disappointed in their view of convicting him by means of false witnesses, the High Priest and Council asked him to tell them, whether he was the MESSIAH? hoping to gain advantage over him, whatever should be his answer. Had he confessed himself to be the CHRIST, they would have condemned him as an impostor; and, if he had denied it, they would have exposed him to scorn, as afraid to maintain the pretensions he had made. Instead of giving a direct answer, our LORD pointed out their unfair and unjust usage of him, and referred to their silence on a former occasion, when he put a question to them, which would have led them to own his authority. In order to force him to declare himself, the High Priest adjured him in the name of God to tell him, whether he was the MESSIAH. Thus called upon, our SAVIOUR immediately answered, that he was; for

2

he

he would not give them cause to charge him with contempt of that sacred Name, nor reason to suppose he would ever relinquish his claim as the MESSIAH: but since he knew they would reject all present proofs, he referred them to the time of his *second* coming, when the matter would be put beyond dispute, and the prophecies fulfilled concerning his glorious coming in the clouds of heaven. Then would they be convinced, that he was not only the MESSIAH, but the SON of GOD. On this Caiaphas, with all the hypocritical appearances of pious indignation, rent his clothes (according to the Jewish custom when any thing was spoken reproachful to GOD), affecting to be grieved, that so vile a wretch, as he regarded JESUS to be, should claim the sovereignty over Israel, and so near a relation to GOD. He then appealed to the Council, who all agreed, that there was no occasion to seek for further evidence, since JESUS had convicted himself of a capital crime; they therefore *unanimously* pronounced him guilty of *blasphemy*.

It is supposed, that two belonging to the Council, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, disapproving these unrighteous proceedings, absented themselves from this assembly.

The officers and soldiers, who had our LORD in custody, finding that he was condemned by the Sanhedrim, offered him the vilest indignities. Thus did the Council and their wicked adherents prove themselves guilty of the very sin they laid to the charge of our blessed LORD; for the Evangelist teaches us to consider *scoffing at CHRIST, and denying him to be the SON of GOD as BLASPHEMY*.

How astonishing it is to contemplate our SAVIOUR's patience under this injurious treatment! In respect to the innocence and usefulness of his doctrine, he made (as we read in the last section) a most graceful and

courageous appeal to all who heard him, and yet submitted to the injustice of his persecutors without uttering a single complaint; satisfied that his integrity was so uniform, no just accusation could be brought against him; and that Divine power so far restrained the false witnesses, that they could not effectually injure his character, or brand him with public infamy.

SECTION XXXV.

JESUS BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE.

From Matt. Chap. xxvii.—Luke, xxiii.—John, xviii.

WHEN the morning was come all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

And the whole multitude of them arose, and when they had bound him, then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.

And it was early, and they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled: but that they might eat the passover.

Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?

They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.

And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that he himself is CHRIST a king.

And

And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

Then saith Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?

And he answered him to never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.

That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus.

And Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the king of the Jews?

Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?

Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up
the

the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean.

And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself was also at Jerusalem at that time.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Although the Jewish rulers had condemned our LORD to death, they could not put their sentence in execution; for about two years before, the Romans had taken from them the power of inflicting capital punishments; therefore early in the morning another council was held, to consider what measures to pursue, when it was determined to send their prisoner to *Pontius Pilate* the Roman governor; and in order to secure him more effectually, they bound him faster than before. So hasty were they to effect their malignant design, that they arrived at the *Prætorium*, or *judgment hall*, (a place erected for the Roman magistrate to keep his court) some hours before the Governor usually appeared. The Jews were obliged to go to this court, to procure an order for the execution of JESUS; and that his punishment might be more severe than the *Jewish* law inflicted upon *blasphemers*, they delivered him up as a *sedition* person, and an enemy to *Cæsar's* authority.

If the Jews had entered into the house of a Gentile, they would have thought themselves polluted, and disqualified for eating of the sacrifices, which were offered on the first day of unleavened bread, which was regarded as a very considerable part of the *passover*, of which eating the *Paschal Lamb* was only the beginning. Pilate, therefore, to comply with their superstitious scruples,

scruples, left the *Prætorium*, and caused his *Tribunal* or *judgment seat* to be erected in an open place adjoining to it, as the Roman governors often did.

When *Pilate* enquired what accusation they brought against *JESUS*? the Jews answered in a manner which shewed, that they felt a secret indignation at being curbed by a superior power, and that they had still a privilege of inflicting *slighter* punishments. *Pilate* saw that this was likely to be a very troublesome affair, and was therefore desirous of shifting it from himself; but the Jews would not suffer him to do so: and when they charged *JESUS* with refusing to pay tribute to *Cæsar*, *Pilate* was obliged to pay attention to it. In this instance was the foreknowledge of our blessed *LORD* remarkably exemplified; for he had declared, he should be *crucified*, which was a Roman and not a Jewish punishment.

With what dignity did *CHRIST* behave during his examination! *Pilate* himself was struck with astonishment at the scene before him. He heard the principal men of the Jewish nation accusing *JESUS* as the vilest of mankind; he beheld him listening to their accusation with silence and perfect composure. An air of meekness, not a consciousness of guilt, appeared in his countenance. *Pilate*, therefore, resolved to examine him apart from the Jews; and for this purpose, returned into the judgment-hall again, and *JESUS* was brought before him. When at length he opened his mouth, the words he uttered were suitable to the majesty of a king doomed for a while to submit to his enemies, but certain of being securely established on a *heavenly throne* at an appointed time. In his dialogue with *Pilate* it is observable, that being asked, whether he was the king of the Jews? our *LORD* answered in so cautious a manner, as
to

to avoid giving the least suspicion, that he had any design against *Cæsar*; for though he declared himself to be a *King*, yet he told *Pilate*, *his kingdom was not of this world*: and he gave undeniable proof that it was not, by the restraint he laid upon his followers not to rescue him, as they might have done, by divine aid, if such had been the will of God.

Pilate being satisfied that Jesus laid no claim to his province, nor meant to raise any sedition in *Cæsar*'s dominions, was yet surprised to hear a man of his humble appearance own himself to be a *King*: on which our LORD declared, that the great end of his coming into the world was to testify to all who were willing to hear him, the *truth of God's promises*. *Pilate*, for want of knowing the prophecies and our SAVIOUR'S doctrine, did not understand what he meant by the *truth*: and being impatient to dispatch this intricate business, he did not wait for an answer to his question, but returned to the Jews, who were greatly enraged to find he was inclined to acquit Jesus; they, therefore, encreased their clamour against him.

When *Pilate* was told that Jesus was a *Galilean*, he gladly seized the opportunity of sending him to *Herod*, who being himself a Jew, came up to Jerusalem to the passover.

SECTION XXXVI.

JESUS EXAMINED BY HEROD, AND SENT BACK TO PILATE.

From Luke, Chap. xxiii.—Matt. xxvii.—Mark, xv.—John, xix.

AND when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because
he

he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

Then he questioned with him in many words: but he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together; for before they were at enmity between themselves.

And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers, and the people,

Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and behold, I having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man, touching those things whereof ye accuse him.

No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him, and lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner whom they would.

And they had then a notable prisoner called Barabbas. (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast in prison.)

And the multitude crying aloud, began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them.

Therefore when they were gathered together Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or JESUS, which is called CHRIST?

(For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy.)

Whilst Pilate was sitting down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do

do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream, because of him.

But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called CHRIST? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.

The governor said, Ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover; will ye therefore that I release unto you the king of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.

And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.

And Pilate answered, and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him, whom ye call the King of the Jews?

And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified: and the voices of them, and of the chief priests, prevailed.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, and said, Hail, king of the Jews: and they smote him with their hands.

Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man.

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they

they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him; for I find no fault in him.

The Jews then answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not, that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?

Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend; whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king.

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his

his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person : see ye to it.

Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

And Pilate, willing to content the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required.

And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired : but he delivered JESUS to be crucified.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We formerly read, that *Herod*, after the death of John the Baptist, desired to see and converse with JESUS ; in hopes that his curiosity would be gratified now, he proposed a variety of questions to him : but our LORD, knowing this was not a proper season to discuss such questions, remained silent, notwithstanding the virulent accusations of his persecutors, and the cruel mockery of *Herod* and his soldiers. No injuries could vanquish his patience, no indignities overcome his greatness of mind. He was arrayed in a gorgeous robe, in order to expose him to contempt for pretending to be a king, and to shew that *Herod* thought him beneath his resentment.

What was the cause of the variance which had subsisted between *Herod* and *Pilate* is not related ; but it possibly might arise from the slaughter of the Galileans, which we formerly read of.

Pilate was, as it appears, extremely desirous of releasing JESUS ; he therefore proposed to set him at liberty, when the Jews claimed his compliance with the annual custom of releasing a Jewish prisoner at the feast. How shocking it is to read that the Jews, even the Chief
Priests

Priests and rulers, preferred an impious *robber* and *murderer* to one who, considered merely as a member of society, had, so far from injuring the community, been constantly employed during the whole of his ministry, in doing good to mankind! But view our LORD as the true MESSIAH, the only SON of GOD and the presumption of the Jews in persecuting him is beyond example. To what a pitch of malice and barbarity must those have arrived, who could join in the dreadful cry of “CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!”

When Pilate found that even the Chief Priests joined their voices with those of the clamorous multitude, he was induced, contrary to the convictions of his own conscience, to comply with their desire; he therefore commanded JESUS to be severely scourged. The soldiers, knowing that it was the Roman custom to scourge prisoners just before they were put to death, concluded that JESUS would be led immediately to execution; they therefore took him back into the judgment hall, and, regarding him as abandoned to their will, resolved to offer him every insult in their power. They stripped him of the splendid dress in which *Herod* had arrayed him, and clothed him in a purple vest, over which they put a scarlet robe, that he might have some mock resemblance of a prince*. Then did their cruel hands place a crown of thorns, and fix it on his head; placing in his hand a reed or stick to represent a sceptre, paying mock homage to the blessed JESUS, and congratulating him on his coronation; whilst he patiently endured their scorn, not even uttering a single complaint though the blood streamed from his back, which they

* St. Matthew says it was a scarlet; St. Mark, that it was a purple robe.—Commentators reconcile this seeming contradiction as above.

had cruelly scourged, and from his temples pierced with the thorny diadem! But all the meekness and resignation of this holy sufferer made no impression on his unfeeling tormentors. They spat on him! they snatched from his hand the stick which they had given him for a sceptre, and smote him on the head, driving the thorns into his sacred forehead and temples! yet not a word of expostulation escaped his lips; for he perfectly resigned himself to the Divine Will, and submitted his cause to the FATHER.

In the mean while *Pilate* (as we may suppose) was attending to the trials of other prisoners; and whilst he was sitting on the tribunal, his wife sent to inform him of her dream. *Pilate*, being alarmed at the message, went himself into the hall, to see what they had done with the prisoner, and appears to have been greatly moved with the condition he found him in; he therefore returned to the Jews, that they might know what torments CHRIST had endured, and declared, that he could not find any fault in him that made him obnoxious to the Roman government. Then came JESUS forth, wearing the ensigns of mock royalty, stained with his own blood! *Pilate* emphatically pointed him out as an object of commiseration, "BEHOLD THE MAN!" but they hardened their hearts against compassion, against every worthy sentiment, and renewed the cry of CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM! *Pilate*, finding them inexorable, desired to deliver JESUS into their hands, and again declared his opinion of his innocence; but the Jews insisted that he was according to their law, deserving of death.

Pilate, apprehensive that his resistance would raise sedition amongst the Jews against the Roman state; and thinking, perhaps, agreeably to heathen superstition, that

that JESUS might be descended from one of their imaginary deities, took him again into the house, and desired to be informed from his own mouth concerning the *divine original* he pretended to; but JESUS knowing that *Pilate* was, in his own conscience, already convinced of his innocence, gave him no answer. The governor was astonished, that a man in such circumstances should make no reply to one who had the power of condemning or releasing him; but JESUS calmly told him, *that he could have no power against him, had it not been given him from above*; meaning (as I apprehend) that had the Jews continued faithful, the Romans would have had no authority over their nation; therefore *the sin of trying CHRIST for his life* originated with those who had provoked GOD to bring them into subjection. *Pilate* examined CHRIST only as a Man accused of seditious intentions against the Emperor's government: the Jewish Council rejected him as the MESSIAH, notwithstanding the undeniable proofs he had given them that he was so. Not that *Pilate* was free from guilt in this affair; for convinced, as he certainly was, of our LORD's innocence, he was very unjust in ordering him to be executed: but still the Jewish High Priest, who delivered him into *Pilate's* hand, had the *greater sin*.

Pilate, satisfied of the injustice of the persecution, resolved the more earnestly to procure CHRIST's release; but the Jews still insisted that sentence should be passed; and effectually put a stop to his intentions, by insinuating that suffering a man to live, who pretended to be a king independently of the Roman Emperor, was in effect to arraign the lawfulness of Cæsar's universal monarchy.

TIBERIUS, who was then Emperor, was a very suspicious prince, and constantly employed spies to watch the
the

the conduct of his officers. This made Pilate apprehensive that he might be charged with want of zeal for Cæsar's interest; he therefore brought Jesus out of the hall again, and seating himself on the tribunal, was resolved to manage this incident so as to procure from the Jews a public acknowledgment of Cæsar's authority: and, therefore, pointing to Jesus, as he now appeared in this mock pomp of royalty, he said to them, "*Behold your king*, if you think fit to own him, as it is said many of you have done." But they cried with indignation, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." Pilate, as if surprised at such an extravagant demand, said, "What, shall I crucify your king?" And the chief priests answered in the name of the people, "We have no king but Cæsar." Thus did they indirectly acknowledge that *the sceptre was departed from Judah*, even whilst they were rejecting SHILOH; whose spiritual kingdom the patriarch Jacob, by divine inspiration, predicted should commence at that period: and thus did they unknowingly pronounce the wrath of God upon the Jews, who, from that time, have had no king of their own, but the kings of other nations have ruled over them.

Pilate, finding it to no purpose to oppose the popular tumult, determined to do all he could, consistently with his *worldly* interest, for the quieting of his conscience; he therefore washed his hands, as a token that he did not willingly consent to the death of Jesus; and warned the Jews that *they* were answerable for the consequences of it. What was their horrid reply? "His BLOOD BE ON US, AND ON OUR CHILDREN!" The succeeding history of the Jewish nation will shew, that this terrible imprecation was dreadfully answered by the

the ruin which fell on them, and the calamities to which they have ever since been continually exposed.

Pilate had no courage to resist the violence of the Jews, but at length yielded to their importunity; and gave sentence that it should be as they required. Barabbas was released, and Jesus delivered unto their will. The severe discipline of scourging he had already undergone, therefore it was not repeated; but the Jewish rabble for a while insulted him, as the Roman soldiers had done before. They derided his pretensions to a kingdom, and abused him as the vilest of slaves; then stripped him with disdain, as if the ensigns of mock royalty (consisting, as we may suppose, of old tattered robes) were too good for him; and put his own garments on him, and led him away to CRUCIFY HIM.

There is a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah so accordant with this part of our SAVIOUR's history, that it will be proper to read it, before we proceed any further. It appears like an oration addressed by CHRIST to those who heard his doctrine, and now beheld his sufferings; for such words as these he certainly would have used, had he thought proper to speak at all; but he knew it was requisite for him to submit in silence, and leave the *written* word of God to account for his submission.

SECTION XXXVII.

A PART OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECY, RELATING TO THE
MESSIAH.

From Chap. I.

THE LORD JEHOVAH hath given me the tongue of the learned; that I might know how to speak a season-

able word to the weary. He wakeneth morning by morning mine ear, to hearken with the attention of a learner.

The LORD JEHOVAH hath opened mine ear; and I was not rebellious; neither did I withdraw myself backward.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: my face I hid not from shame and spitting.

For the LORD JEHOVAH is my helper; therefore I am not ashamed. Therefore have I set my face as a flint: and I know that I shall not be confounded.

He that justifieth me is near hand: who is he that will contend with me? Let us stand forth together: Who is mine adversary? Let him come on to the contest.

Behold the LORD JEHOVAH is my advocate: who is he that shall condemn me? Lo! all of them shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall consume them.

Who is there among you that feareth JEHOVAH? Let him hearken unto the voice of his servant: that walketh in darkness, and has no light? let him trust in the name of JEHOVAH; and rest himself on the support of his God.

Behold, all ye who kindle a fire; who heap the fuel round about: walk ye in the light of your fire, and of the fuel which ye have kindled. This ye shall have at my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow*.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This part of ISAIAH's prophecy must have appeared very obscure, till our LORD by his preaching threw

* Bishop Lowth's translation.

light on it. He repeatedly, in his conversation with his disciples, alluded to it; and taught them, that the MESSIAH was to endure a variety of sufferings and indignities.

Had the Jewish teachers been thoroughly acquainted with the sacred writings, they would have remarked such a passage as this; and if they had compared it with our SAVIOUR's life and doctrine, as he called upon them to do, they would have been able to account for his extraordinary wisdom, and must have discerned that he was the MESSIAH; and if so, that it would be the extreme of presumption in any adversary to appear against *him* who had JEHOVAH for his advocate. But as our LORD knew that the case would be otherwise, he resolved to act in direct conformity to the description which the prophet, by divine inspiration, had given of his behaviour; and reposed entire confidence in GOD THE FATHER, who through the DIVINE WORD fortified his mind with invincible patience; thus prepared, he went up *willingly* to Jerusalem. As his enemies would not be convinced, by what he had already said and done, that he was the CHRIST, there was no reason to expect they would listen to him at a time when their malice was at the height: and since they disdained to be guided by the *light*, which he had repeatedly offered them, he left them (agreeably to divine justice) to the *fire of their own kindling*: by which we may understand the effects of ungoverned passions and mere worldly policy, exclusive of faith and trust in God, which at length brought down the just judgments of God to consume their city and nation.

If we condemn, as we certainly must do, the conduct of the *Jews*, let us take heed to our *own*: for though we cannot now seize upon our LORD's person, bind his hands, drag him to the hall of judgment, smite him

on the cheek, spit on his face, scourge him, and commit other outrages practised by his persecutors; we shall be partakers in their guilt, if we indulge the same spirit of enmity against him as they did; which those do, who reject our LORD's doctrine, deride his sufferings, deny his divinity, or bring contempt on his holy religion, by despicable ridicule or profane jests. Nor are those less guilty, who, calling themselves Christians, lead immoral lives, and give occasion to scoffers, to slander their holy profession. Let us now resume the melancholy story, and follow the steps of our blessed REDEEMER to mount Calvary.

SECTION XXXVIII.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

*From Matt. Chap. xxvii.—Mark, xv.—Luke, xxiii.—
John, xix.*

AND JESUS bearing his cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.

And as they came out of the city, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name, the father of Alexander and Rufus, and on him they laid the cross, and compelled him to bear it after JESUS.

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, who also bewailed and lamented him.

But JESUS turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

For behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breast which never gave suck.

Then

Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

And there were also two others, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

And when they were come unto Golgotha, on mount Calvary, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall, and when he had tasted thereof he would not drink.

And they gave him wine mingled with myrrh, but he received it not.

And they crucified him, and the two malefactors, one on the right hand, the other on the left.

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rent it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my garment amongst them, and for my vesture they did cast lots.

These things therefore the soldiers did: and sitting down they watched him there.

And Pilate wrote a title and put it upon the cross, and the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.

Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not the King of the Jews : but that he said, I am the King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written, I have written.

And they that passed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the SON of GOD, come down from the cross.

Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

He trusted in GOD, let him deliver him now if he will have him : for he said, I am the Son of GOD.

And one of the malefactors who was crucified with him railed on him, saying, If thou be CHRIST, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear GOD, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ?

And we indeed justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done nothing amiss.

And he said unto JESUS, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And JESUS said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.

Now there stood by the cross of JESUS, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, and many other women, who also when he was in Galilee followed him and ministered unto him.

When

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy Son.

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Some of them that stood there when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar; and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.

And the rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and when he had cried again with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.

And behold the vail of the temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.

Now when the centurion, who stood over against him, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man; truly this man was the Son of God.

And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Jews were in great haste to get Jesus dispatched; and supposing that he was extremely weak after the sufferings he had endured, they imagined that he would not be able to walk so fast as they wished him to do; they therefore compelled a poor African, whom they accidentally met, to assist in bearing a heavy piece of wood belonging to the cross, on which he was going to be executed. It is likely, that this incident proved instrumental to the conversion of Simon and his family; for his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, were Christians of some note in the church afterwards.

Whilst our blessed LORD proceeded on his melancholy journey, all but his enemies pathetically lamented his fate; especially those pious women who had long ministered unto him, and now had the zeal and fortitude to follow him. Nor was our LORD unmindful of their affection; for even at the time when he was going to be put to a cruel and ignominious death, sorrow for his own sufferings gave way to commiseration for them, and he kindly endeavoured to divert their grief into another channel. Our LORD then repeated his prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, but with no signs of malice or resentment; yet in such striking terms, as were sufficient to excite his followers to pray that they might not be involved in them; and to warn his enemies to endeavour to deprecate the
wrath

wrath of God. On this occasion, our LORD made use of *proverbial* expressions, to intimate the extreme distress to which the inhabitants of Jerusalem would be exposed. Being *childless* was reckoned a great curse; therefore a Jewish woman must be in very wretched circumstances, who should esteem it a blessing to be so; and none but the most miserable people in the world would wish for the mountains to fall on them, and the hills to cover them. The expression, "*If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*" is thought to imply, that if the Jews inflicted such agonies on our LORD, who was free from sin, what might they not themselves expect, whose guilt made them proper objects of divine wrath, as dry wood is fit fuel to the consuming fire? Mount Calvary was the usual place for executing criminals; it was a little without the city, and seemed a proper spot of ground for the purpose, as, on account of its eminence, the malefactors executed there might be seen at a considerable distance, and by a great number of spectators.

It was customary to give to dying criminals a portion of strong wine mingled with spices, in order to stupify their senses, and abate the pain of their sufferings. The soldiers, who attended our LORD, offered him, instead of this, an odious mixture of wine mingled with gall: this he tasted, that he might submit to every circumstance which THE FATHER had allotted him; but he would not drink any large draught of it, knowing his doing so would answer no valuable end. It seems that some of his friends had prepared a cordial cup for him, "but * he declined this office of humanity, that he might shew himself unappalled by the horrors of instant crucifixion; and that he might fully possess his reason,

* Bishop Newton's Observations on our Lord's Conduct.

and thus display the virtues suitable to his high character, in the season of so severe a trial." Every thing being now prepared, JESUS stripped of his garments, and the cross laid on the ground, he was extended on it, and his mangled naked body, already covered with wounds and bruises, was fastened to it by large nails which were driven through his hands and feet. When the executioners had performed their cruel office, the cross was raised from the ground, and fixed in a hole prepared to receive it. What excruciating torment must our LORD endure! Yet not a murmur or complaint escaped his lips; but, with unexampled charity and greatness of mind, he prayed for his murderers, at the very time they were executing the wicked design of his enemies against him.

That his death might be rendered as ignominious as possible, and the multitude prejudiced against him, crosses were erected on each side of that to which he was nailed, on which were crucified two infamous malefactors, condemned to death for theft. Thus was fulfilled a prediction of Isaiah *, "*that he should be numbered with the transgressors.*"

As soon as JESUS was fixed on the cross, the soldiers, with that unfeeling attention to their own interest so common to vulgar minds, seized on his garments as their perquisite; the manner of their parting them was predicted by the royal Psalmist †.

It was usual, in cases of crucifixion, to put upon the cross, over the head of the criminal, an inscription, containing the substance of the crime for which he was executed. It is very remarkable, that *Pilate* was so overruled by divine Providence, that instead of casting reproach upon JESUS, and exposing him to ridicule, he

* Isaiah liii.

† Psalm xxii. 18.

declared his real character, and proclaimed his kingdom. The inscription was written in three languages, that it might be intelligible to Jews, Romans, and most other foreigners. Though the Chief Priests made great objections to the form of this inscription, *Pilate* could not be prevailed on to alter it. Happy would it have been for him, had he shewn the same firmness before! When the Chief Priests and rulers found that they could not procure an alteration, they mixed themselves with the throng, to feast their eyes with the miseries of the holy Sufferer, triumphing over his last agonies, blaspheming, mocking, and reviling him, and even upbraiding him, because he did not exert for his own deliverance that saving power, by which they could not deny numbers had been benefited. Our blessed LORD remained unmoved at their insults, and made no attempt to justify himself; and when one of the malefactors, who was executed with him, reproached him, he *answered not*: but when the other addressed him as a *King*, he received his homage, and promised to reward his penitence.

What agonizing sorrow must the mother of Jesus have felt, when she saw her beloved Son thus tortured, and heard the reproaches of his cruel enemies! Now was fulfilled the prediction of Simeon, "*that a sword should pierce through her own soul.*" JESUS saw his mother standing, and knew what she suffered; he saw also his beloved disciple *John*, who, he was certain, would, for *his sake*, gladly perform any office of filial love towards her: our LORD, therefore, commended his mother to the care of his benevolent Apostle, with whom she is said to have lived many years. His attention to this circumstance, in the midst of such agonies, was a great instance of the composure of his mind.

The darkness which happened at noon-day, while our SAVIOUR hung on the cross, was out of the common course of nature; for a total eclipse of the sun could not take place, as it was the full of the moon: we may, then, consider it as caused by the immediate power of GOD, to add solemnity to the awful scene, and express his Divine displeasure against those who crucified his beloved Son; it is thought not to have been extended beyond the land of Judea. Our LORD seems to have endured his torments for a long time in silence; and when his agonies and dejection of mind were greater than *human nature* could sustain, he did not give way to such complainings as would naturally have proceeded from the mouth of any other man under his circumstances, but vented his sorrows in the words of Divine inspiration, “*My GOD, my GOD, why hast thou FORSAKEN ME?*” which proved, as I shall endeavour to explain, that he was the MESSIAH. Our LORD uttered this exclamation in the Syro-Chaldaic tongue, which the Jews well understood; and, it is probable, they wilfully misinterpreted his words, that they might have a pretence for insulting him to the last. He now felt extreme thirst in consequence of his pains, and, as this particular had been predicted*, he made it known; on which, agreeably also to the Psalmist’s prediction, vinegar was offered to him to drink; and by receiving of this, he completed all that had been foretold concerning the sufferings that should be inflicted on him by *others*. Nothing now remained, *but to offer his life as an atonement for the sins of the whole world*; and to shew, that it was not forced from him, but still remained in *full vigour*, he cried with a *loud voice*; then bowing his venerable head in token of resignation to the Divine Will, he *willingly dismissed*†

* See Psalm, lxi. 21.

† See Doddridge’s Family Expositor, Vol. II. p. 591.

his spirit, with a lively faith and holy joy committing it to the hands of the FATHER, in full assurance that *He would not leave his soul in death, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption* *. Our LORD was nailed to the cross between 9 and 12 o'clock, in the forenoon, and expired between 3 and 4 in the afternoon, which was the time of offering the evening sacrifice, and also for killing the Paschal Lamb. It was at this hour that the angel Gabriel delivered to the prophet Daniel that glorious prediction of the MESSIAH; and some learned authors conjecture, that from that time to the hour of CHRIST's death was exactly seventy weeks of years †.

Our LORD in his last moments called upon GOD as his FATHER, and to shew the unbelieving Jews, that GOD acknowledged him as his SON, the veil of the Temple, which separated the *Holy Place* from the *most Holy*, though made of the richest and strongest tapestry, was miraculously rent in two, from the top to the bottom; so that while the priest was ministering at the golden altar, the *sacred Oracle* was laid open to full view; which was a *token* of the abolition of the *Mosaic ritual*, and a *type* that a passage was opened to the PRESENCE of GOD in heaven by the *sacrifice of CHRIST*, the *true PASCHAL LAMB*.

As a farther emblem of the approaching destruction of the temple, its very foundation was shaken by an earthquake; and many rocks in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem torn asunder in so wonderful a manner, as to retain, according to the report of authentic travellers, even to the present times, visible marks of miraculous power ‡. Thus, when the Jews refused to acknowledge

* Henry's Annotations.

† See Sect. xxxi. Vol. V.

‡ Maundrell's Travels. See Doddridge, Vol. II. p. 229, in the notes.

the MESSIAH, did the very *stones* help to proclaim him ; and the centurion who guarded our LORD during his execution, though a *Gentile*, struck with his amazing fortitude, and the prodigies that followed his death, expressed a thorough conviction that JESUS was not only a *righteous man*, but *the SON OF GOD*.

The poor women, who with affectionate courage had followed our LORD to the cross, even after his disciples forsook him and fled, being no longer able to give him any charitable assistance, retired to some distance : perhaps they turned their care to the consolation of his afflicted mother, or sought a situation where they might mingle their tears with her's, without exposing themselves to the insults of a furious rabble.

Those who were *disinterested* spectators of the wonderful scene, whom *curiosity* alone had assembled, were so affected with it, that they smote their breasts, which heaved with pity and commiseration, fear and dread ; yet they returned to their own houses, without professing their belief in CHRIST ; though it is very probable, that the impressions which the sight of the crucifixion made, prepared their minds for the preaching of the Apostles afterwards, and that many were then converted.

This portion of Sacred History demands our particular attention ; let us therefore see what practical instruction we may derive from it.

From our LORD's address to the women who followed him, "*Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, &c.*" we are taught, that we should not entertain the same kind of sorrow for the sufferings and death of CHRIST, which we feel for the distresses of mankind. If it was useless to weep *for him* at the very time he endured them, it certainly must be so *now* that he sits at the
right

right hand of God, far beyond the reach of pain or sorrow. The sentiments, therefore, proper for us to indulge when we meditate on this important subject, are, an ardent love and affection for CHRIST, on account of his having submitted to such severe afflictions for the sake of mankind, and a grateful joy that he has overcome death, and sitteth at the right hand of God. All our *sorrows* should be for those sins which expose us, our children, and our country, to the anger of God. For these our tears may justly flow, since it was the accumulated sins of the world, of which ours make a part, that required our LORD's submission to such tortures. These will be *profitable* tears, if they proceed *from real penitence*, and are *followed by amendment of life*; for they will recommend us to the compassion of our God and SAVIOUR, and avert those judgments which will fall on us, as well as they did on Jerusalem, if we provoke the Divine vengeance by presumption and infidelity.

From the manner in which our blessed LORD submitted to his sufferings, we are instructed to bear all the sorrow, pain, and indignity, which may fall to our lot in this world, with patience and resignation to the *Divine will*; and not to indulge a spirit of hatred against our enemies, but to pray for them: especially as it is possible that those who injure us may do it through ignorance.

The men who nailed CHRIST to the cross, in all probability *knew not what they did*, having been kept in ignorance by their rulers, who had filled their minds with prejudices against him and his doctrine, and his intercession for them prevailed; for many of those who had a hand in the crucifixion were converted afterwards by the preaching of St. Peter.

Our LORD's tenderness to his mother in his dying moments,

moments, teaches us to honour our parents, and to use our utmost endeavours to provide for their ease and comfort.

From our LORD's address to the FATHER in the hour of darkness and distress, we are encouraged to call upon GOD, even when he hides himself from us; and from his *last words* we learn, what should be the sentiments of our hearts in the awful hour of death; namely, a care for our souls, a resignation of them into the hands of GOD, and a joyful hope of a resurrection from the dead.

Since, from the rending of the veil, we are taught that a passage is opened for us into the most Holy Place by our LORD's *sacrifice of his body on the cross*, let us endeavour to enter it through faith in his blood.

The behaviour of the *penitent* thief encourages sinners to seek the mercy of GOD through the intercession of CHRIST, even in their last moments, if their penitence be sincere; whilst the example of the *obdurate* sinner shews the danger of deferring repentance to the end of life*. No one who lives in an habitual course of sin can possibly tell what his disposition may be when the hour of death approaches. *Repentance* is seldom a *sudden thing*; for it consists in a *change of mind*, which cannot, but through the miraculous power of GOD, take place in an instant; and sinners have no reason to expect miracles for their conversion. It is likely that the judgment of GOD had had its proper effect on the mind of the *penitent* thief, and produced a sorrow for sin, which rendered him an object of Divine compassion; and that the other was a hardened impious wretch, who

* There is amongst the Sermons of Bishop Sherlock an excellent one on this subject, which every person ought to read who has the least idea that a *death-bed repentance* will atone for a *sinful life*.

had, by his presumption and blasphemy, excluded himself from divine grace.

Before we conclude this section, it will be proper to consider how it was possible for our LORD, in whom the GODHEAD dwelt, to feel *pain* and *sorrow* as a MAN.

We must not suppose, from CHRIST's using the exclamation, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" that his *Divine nature* was *withdrawn*; but only that his *Divine* and *human* natures, though *united*, were *distinct*; so that each retained its *separate faculties*—the *SOUL subordinate* to the *DIVINE NATURE*, as the *body* to the *soul*—the *inferior nature*, actuated by the *intelligence* of the superior nature, which the *latter* had the power to *communicate* or to withhold from the *former*. Of this we may form some idea by what passes in *ourselves*. Our *bodies* act in consequence of the *intelligence* of our *minds*; for having no *rational faculties*, our *bodies* cannot of themselves perform *rational actions*. The *powers* of our *souls* are also *limited*, so that *they* cannot attain *Divine knowledge* by any *natural exertions*. Our SAVIOUR alone, of all the human race, demonstrated that *he* had *Divine knowledge*, which he repeatedly attributed to the GODHEAD dwelling in him: from whence we may conclude, that his *soul* was in its *nature* the same as *other men's*, but *informed* and *actuated* by the GODHEAD, agreeably to the *Divine will*, as circumstances required. If therefore we suppose the *DIVINE WORD* to have *proportioned his communications* to the *soul*, according to the *Divine will*, without being subject to be *controuled* by the *inferior nature*, we may account for his operations being on some occasions *suspended*; at which times (as we may conceive) the fear of being forsaken *naturally* arose in our LORD's *mind*. But we will now read the psalm which contains his dying exclamation, as that will serve to illustrate the

the above conjecture. It was written by the *royal Psalmist*, many ages before CHRIST was born into the world.

SECTION XXXIX.

PART OF A PSALM OF DAVID, RELATING TO THE
SUFFERINGS OF THE MESSIAH.

From Psalm xxii.

MY GOD, my GOD, why hast thou forsaken me ?
why art thou so far from helping me, and from the
words of my roaring ?

O my GOD, I cry in the day-time, but thou hearest
not ; and in the night-season, and am not silent.

But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises
of Israel.

Our fathers trusted in thee ; they trusted, and thou
didst deliver them.

They cried unto thee, and were delivered ; they
trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

But I am a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men,
and despised of the people.

All they that see me, laugh me to scorn : they shoot
out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

He trusted on the LORD, that he would deliver him :
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

But thou art he that took me out of the womb ; thou
didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's
breast.

Be not far from me, for trouble is near ; for there is
none to help.

Many bulls have compassed me : strong bulls of
Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me
with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

I am

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

My strength is dried up like a potsherd: and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

For dogs have compassed me, the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

But be not thou far from me, O LORD; O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Deliver my soul from the sword: my darling from the power of the dog.

Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of unicorns.

I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is one circumstance amongst many others, that strongly points out the *Divine original* of the *SCRIPTURES*, and shews, that they were intended to convey rules for the religious and moral conduct of *mankind in general*; which is, that every person in all ages of the world, let their disposition or condition in life be what they will, may find many passages in them so suited to themselves, that they appear as if written expressly for their use, though at the same time they are equally well adapted to thousands more. There are, besides, other passages which cannot be so generally applied, but which seem

seem to have been designed for *one* particular person only (of which the psalm we have just read is an instance). These would have appeared to have been written in vain; for we could not have discovered their import, had not their exact agreement with our SAVIOUR's history, and his frequent references to them, taught us that they related to *him*.

This psalm is allowed to have been written by *David*, yet it cannot be applied to him (excepting in a *metaphorical* sense, as a *type* of the MESSIAH), for it does not exactly agree with any part of David's history; but we may perceive from the account of our LORD's crucifixion, that it is very descriptive of *his* sufferings. We may therefore reasonably suppose, that David was inspired to write it, in order to shew that God foreknew every circumstance relating to the MESSIAH: that those who should believe in CHRIST might form an idea of the sentiments their blessed SAVIOUR entertained, at a time when the comfortable sense of the *Divine* PRESENCE was suspended—and that JESUS himself might derive consolation from reflecting, that he had suffered no more than the prophets had predicted he *would* do.

If we examine the psalm attentively, we may perceive such a *succession* of sentiments as were perfectly suited to our LORD's situation, and so consistent with his character, that we may safely admit it *as a part of his history*. Let us, then, suppose it an exact picture of his mind at that instant, when the ETERNAL SON OF GOD having performed *his* part of the *Covenant* with mankind, by delivering up to be crucified that *body* which he had taken to his *Divine nature*, suspended his operations, that the MESSIAH might perform the part which belonged to *him* as MAN.

What an awful moment! Never was there a time in which our LORD stood so much in need of comfort from
above;

above ; for every circumstance contributed to strike his soul with horror and dismay. He was hanging on the cross in the most agonizing torture, his enemies reviling, his friends looking on with unavailing sorrow, and the light of the sun obscured with unusual darkness.

We may judge from the beginning of this Psalm that, during the long silence our LORD observed, he was engaged in *secret prayer*, entreating the FATHER to grant him strength to sustain the severe trial. Finding that no *inward* consolation was granted him, nor an *angel* sent, as on former occasions, to comfort him, the fear of being *forsaken* arose in his mind ; therefore knowing that he had led a life of perfect innocence, holiness, and obedience, and that he had never incurred the anger of the FATHER by *committing sin*, it was *natural* for him to expostulate in the words of the inspired writer, “ My God, my God, *why* hast thou forsaken me ? ” &c.

From the succeeding verses of this prophetic Psalm we may suppose, that our LORD had no sooner uttered this pathetic lamentation, than a ray of comfort darted into his soul ; and the remembrance of God’s faithfulness, and the many deliverances he had granted to the Patriarchs, encouraged him to hope, that HE also should be delivered from his enemies. Yet he could not be wholly insensible of the indignities offered to him, nor of the abject condition to which HE was reduced, who had openly professed to trust in a peculiar manner to God, as his *own* FATHER. But nothing could drive him to *despair* ; for he considered that he had, even from his birth, experienced in a very extraordinary manner the protection of the FATHER : he therefore renewed his petition, that GOD would again grant him the comfort of his presence, as he could not by *human means*, nor consistently with his obedience to
the

the *Divine will*, deliver *himself* from his deplorable situation, neither could he be succoured by any *mortal* power.

He then enumerated the particulars of his sufferings, and once more implored the FATHER to send him speedy relief, lest his enemies should *forcibly* take his life from him, which they haunted for as eagerly as a dog pursues a hind ; nay, with the fury of an hungry lion seeking for prey. Such relief as he now implored, our LORD had frequently experienced, having been miraculously delivered through the power derived from the GOD-HEAD, when surrounded by the fiercest and strongest enemies.

It may be inferred from the last verse of this section, that our LORD *received* the consolation he prayed for ; and in consequence of it, professed a resolution of declaring to the Apostles, and through them to the rest of his faithful people, the power, wisdom, and justice of GOD *the* FATHER ; who, though he hideth his face for a time, yet will he return and refresh the soul that trusteth to his mercy.

Shortly after our blessed Redeemer *willingly* yielded up his spirit into the hands of the FATHER, and thus *completed* that *sacrifice* which the ETERNAL SON OF GOD *began*.

If we admit this psalm as a part of our LORD's history, it will afford encouragement and useful instruction to such Christians as are apt to indulge *religious melancholy* ; for it plainly shews, that the most afflicting circumstances may befall those who are highest in the favour of GOD, since his *beloved Son* was not exempt from them ; and also, that our heavenly FATHER is never nearer to us, than when he appears to withdraw the inward consolation of his holy Spirit. Let us, therefore, carefully guard our minds from *despair*, and
in

in the hour of distress trust in that Divine mercy, by which we have been sustained and preserved from the very beginning of our existence, which has ever been extended to the faithful from the foundation of the world, and which will, at a proper season, deliver *us*, if our FAITH fail not.

Let us now pursue the history, and see how the Jews proceeded after our LORD had yielded up the ghost.

SECTION XL.

THE BURIAL OF OUR LORD.—THE SEALING OF THE SEPULCHRE.

*From John, Chap. xix.—Mark, xv.—Luke, xxiii.
Matt. xxvii.*

Now it was the preparation, therefore, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath-day was an high day,) the Jews besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.

But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs.

But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.

And he that saw it, bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that he might believe.

For these things were done that the Scriptures should be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken.

And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came,

came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.

And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him, whether he had been any while dead.

And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.

And there came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.

Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden: and in the garden a new sepulchre, hewn out of a rock, wherein was never man yet laid.

There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews preparation day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand; and they rolled a great stone unto the door of the sepulchre.

And the women also which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

Among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath-day, according to the commandment.

Now the next day that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,

Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver, said while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.

Command

Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead : so the last error shall be worse than the first.

Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can.

So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was the custom of the *Romans* to expose on the cross the bodies of those who were crucified, till the fowls of the air consumed them, or till they were destroyed by the injury of the weather : and it was usual to set a guard to prevent the friends of those who had been executed from stealing the bodies to bury them. On the contrary, the *Jewish* law ordained, that whoever was sentenced to die, should be interred on the *very day* of their execution. The *Jerus* were particularly solicitous to observe this injunction in respect to our LORD, and the malefactors who were executed with him, that the sabbath day might not be profaned ; especially as *this* sabbath was a solemn festival, being the day following the *Passover*, and also the second day of the *Feast of unleavened Bread*. They therefore besought *Pilate*, that the legs of those who had been crucified might be broken, in order to effectually dispatch them, and that their dead bodies might be taken away. The governor, knowing their customs, complied with their request, which the soldiers proceeded to execute ; but impressed, as it seems, with awe by the prodigies which had lately happened, they passed by the cross of *Jesus*, and broke the legs of both the thieves before they presumed to

approach it ; and finding that he was actually dead, they forbore to lay their hands on him : but as it was requisite for them to ascertain his death, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear so deeply, that, according to the nature of the human frame, he could not have survived the wound had it been given him in perfect health. The incision was followed by a remarkable effusion of *water and blood* ; which are understood by many to be significant of the happy effects of his death, which at once purifies from sin the souls of those who believe and trust in him, and satisfies the injured justice of God. This will be understood better from the writings of the Apostles.

As it is absolutely necessary for every Christian to believe that CHRIST *actually died*, the Evangelist *John*, who gave the account we have been reading of the means used to prove that he was dead, before he was taken from the cross, added his *solemn attestation*, that he was *himself* an *eye-witness* of what he related, and therefore could not be deceived. He also added, that these things were done, *that the scripture might be fulfilled* ; which they were in so remarkable a manner, as must surely carry conviction to the mind of every person who compares the Prophecies with the History of our LORD.

As JESUS expired sooner than was usual for people suffering crucifixion, *Pilate* made strict enquiry, to satisfy himself that he was really dead ; and when he found that there was no reason to suppose there was the least life remaining in him, he granted his sacred body to *Joseph of Arimathea*, one of the members of the Sanhedrim, a wise and honourable man, who, with a noble courage which testified his sincere affection, requested it might be delivered to him. *Nicodemus* also ventured, in defiance of the hatred and resentment of his brethren,

to give an open proof of his attachment to our LORD.

Time would not admit of their embalming the body immediately, as the sabbath, which began at six on Friday evening, was just at hand : they therefore wrapped it in a great many folds of linen, and either *intermixed* the spices, or placed them near the corpse to preserve it from corruption, and then deposited it in a *new* tomb, in which no man had ever been laid. The pious women who attended our LORD's crucifixion followed them, wishing to perform the last friendly offices for him themselves ; and observing that he was not *embalmed*, they resolved to pay this honour to his precious remains as soon as the sabbath-day was past : for which purpose they provided a quantity of the necessary ingredients.

Though the enemies of the blessed Jesus beheld him a lifeless corpse covered with wounds and bruises, their malice was not satisfied. They remembered his prediction that *he should rise again*, and were determined, if possible, to prove to the world that he was an impostor : therefore, instead of fixing their thoughts on devotional exercises upon the sabbath-day, they studied how to effect their wishes : and as soon as evening came, repaired to Pilate, and obtained his permission to make the sepulchre secure, and place a guard over it, under a pretence that his disciples would steal away the body, and report that he was risen from the dead, with the view of persuading the people to embrace his doctrine.

There is no doubt but that the Jews took care to satisfy themselves, before they sealed the stone which closed the sepulchre, that the body of our LORD was actually in it ; and as the tomb was hewn out of the *solid rock*, it was not possible to carry it off any other way.

Thus was our LORD's sacred body deposited in the

grave in an honourable manner by his friends, and guarded by his enemies so strictly, as to cut off every means of deception. The former, we may conclude, retired to *weep* and *lament*, while the latter exulted in his apparent destruction.

Joseph and *Nicodemus* must certainly have been fully convinced that *JESUS* was worthy of their highest veneration, or they would not have ventured to shew such honour to his corpse; and it is probable that they believed he would rise from the dead, or they would scarcely have hazarded the reproaches their brethren would have cast on them, had it proved otherwise.

From the example of these two illustrious men we are instructed, let our circumstances in life be ever so great, not to despise the *Cross of CHRIST*, but to think of a crucified Redeemer with the utmost reverence: and by our *LORD's* burial we are reconciled to the grave.

Let us now enquire after the traitor *Judas*.

SECTION XLI.

JUDAS ISCARIOT REPENTETH, RETURNETH THE MONEY
TO THE HIGH PRIEST, AND HANGETH HIMSELF.

From Matt. Chap. xxvii.—Acts, i.

WHEN *Judas*, who had betrayed his *LORD*, saw that he was condemned, he repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

Saying, I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.

And

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

And falling headlong he burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out.

And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.

And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.

(Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by * the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value,

And gave them for the potter's field, as the LORD appointed me.)

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We read in a former section, in what manner Judas betrayed his Master to the Jewish council, *willingly* yielding his mind to the suggestions of *Satan*, unmoved by the endearing behaviour of *JESUS*, which, one would have thought, must have melted the most obdurate heart.

As soon as he had performed the treacherous act, and received the reward of his iniquity, the *devil* abandoned him to the terrors of his own conscience, which im-

* The word *Jeremy* is omitted, as the prediction alluded to is not to be found in the book of *Jeremiah*, but in that of *Zechariah*. Commentators have various ways of accounting for this circumstance, which some impute, and I think with great plausibility, to the error of a transcriber, which might, it seems, easily happen from the similarity of different letters in the Greek alphabet.

mediately set themselves in dreadful array against him. When he heard that his LORD was condemned to be crucified, he repented of his treachery, but with repentance very unlike that of *Peter*: It led him indeed to confess his crime to the High Priest, and to bear testimony to the innocence of his Master (in which the providence of God remarkably appears); but we do not find that he humbled his soul before God, or wished for reconciliation with CHRIST as the Son of God.

How shocking it is to read the answer which the chief priests and elders made, when Judas declared that he had betrayed innocent blood! It plainly shewed, that they were determined to put our LORD to death, and to reject all proofs of his innocence.

None but those who have felt the bitterest pangs of remorse, can form a proper conception of the anguish of mind which the traitor endured, when he found that the sentence of condemnation passed on his LORD was irrevocable, and himself abandoned by the partners of his crime, to his own dreadful reflections! His frightened conscience gave him no leisure to reflect on the unbounded benevolence of CHRIST, or to seek for comfort, by pouring out his sorrows in the bosom of a friend; but hastily concluding that his own sin was *unpardonable*, he flung down, in an agony of distress, the price of his iniquity, and went and destroyed himself.

The chief priests, quite at a loss how to dispose of the money, took it up, and laid it by for the present; but after our LORD's death they held a council, when, under an hypocritical pretence that it was unlawful to bring the hire of a traitor, or the price of a malefactor, into the sacred treasury, they resolved to apply the thirty pieces of silver to a purpose which would tend at once

to impress the people with great reverence for the *temple*, and an high opinion of their humanity and liberality towards strangers.

The *Potter's field* was in the neighbourhood of *Jerusalem*, and probably so called, on account of its having been occupied by a *Potter*; who might, by digging it for his manufacture, have rendered it in a great measure unfit for *tillage*, and consequently of little value. The *strangers*, to whose use it was appropriated, were *foreigners*, who had no sepulchres of their own, and whom the *Jews* disdained to inter amongst those of their own *holy nation*. The name of *Aceldama*, or the *Field of Blood*, was given to it by the people, because it was purchased with that money which was the price of the life of *JESUS*.

The prophecy alluded to is in the book of the prophet *Zechariah*. There is great obscurity in it; but it seems to foretel the indignities which the *Jews* would put upon the *MESSIAH*, when he should appear amongst them as a *shepherd*, by offering for him, in return for his care, thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave; which he would throw from him with disdain in the house of the *LORD*, and give it to a *Potter*; after which he would break his pastoral staff, and cease to be the *Shepherd of Israel*.

From the example of *Judas* we learn, that the indulgence of *covetous desires* lays the mind open to the temptations of *Satan*, and that those who forsake *CHRIST* forfeit the benefit of *divine grace*. We are also taught, that there is no possibility of *annihilating conscience*, for the punishment of a man's sin always begins from himself, and from his own reflections. We are likewise instructed, that unless we seek for divine pardon and grace, the *pangs of guilt* will end in *despair*, which will be productive of effects fatal to both body and soul.

Had *Judas* felt a *godly sorrow* for his crimes, there is no doubt but he would have been pardoned ; for some of our LORD's murderers were saved through *faith* and *repentance*. He had hardened his heart by resisting divine grace, and had slighted all the warnings given him by CHRIST ; therefore, though he had a sense of sin, he had no hope of pardon afforded him ; and his repentance, instead of working out his salvation, filled his soul with intolerable anguish, and at length led him to be his own executioner. The last desperate act proved, that the *principles of religion* were extinguished in his mind : for surely no one who believes in a future state of rewards and punishments will commit self-murder ; because that, so far from putting an end to his misery, will only be a means of accelerating the torments of hell, which may, by proper repentance, be entirely avoided. It is certainly the height of folly, as well as wickedness, for any one to attempt the destruction of himself, since he will by such a rash step unavoidably *increase* and *perpetuate* the agonies of remorse from which he wishes to fly ; and add to their sting the dreadful reflection of having perpetrated a crime, for which there is no opportunity of repentance. It is much the safest way to keep the mind perpetually on its guard against temptation ; for which purpose, an habitual love of GOD and CHRIST, and frequent prayer, are the best means that can be used ; for they will certainly obtain divine grace, which is an effectual antidote against despair.

We will now read a part of Isaiah's prophecy, which foretold our SAVIOUR's sufferings and death in a very remarkable manner.

SECTION XLII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH, RELATING TO
THE SUFFERINGS OF THE MESSIAH.

From Chap. lii, liii.

BEHOLD, my servant shall prosper ; he shall be raised aloft, and magnified, and very highly exalted.

As many were astonished at him ; (to such a degree was his countenance disfigured, more than that of man ; and his form, more than the sons of men ;)

So shall he sprinkle many nations : Before him shall kings shut their mouths : for what was not before declared to them, they shall see ; and what they had not heard, they shall attentively consider.

Who hath believed our report : and to whom hath the arm of JEHOVAH been manifested ?

For he groweth up in their sight like a tender sucker : and like a root from a thirsty soil : He hath no form nor any beauty, that we should regard him : nor is his countenance such, that we should desire him.

Despised, nor accounted in the number of men ; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; as one that hideth his face from us : He was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely our infirmities he hath borne : and our sorrows, he hath carried them : yet we thought him judiciously stricken : smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions ; was smitten for our iniquities ; the chastisement, by which our peace is effected, was laid upon him ; and by his bruises we are healed.

We all of us like sheep have strayed; we have turned aside, every one to his own way; and JEHOVAH hath made to light upon him the iniquity of us all.

It was exacted, and he was made answerable; and he opened not his mouth: as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb; so he opened not his mouth.

By an oppressive judgement he was taken off; and his manner of life who would declare? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was smitten to death.

And his grave was appointed with the wicked; but with the rich man was his tomb.

Although he had done no wrong, neither was there any guile in his mouth; yet it pleased JEHOVAH to crush him with affliction.

If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice, he shall see a seed which shall prolong their days, and the gracious purpose of JEHOVAH shall prosper in his hands.

Of the travail of his soul he shall see [the fruit], and be satisfied: by the knowledge of him shall my righteous servant justify many: for the punishment of their iniquity he shall bear.

Therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil: because he poured out his soul unto death; and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many; and made intercession for the transgressors*.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Instead of attempting a very minute explanation of

* Bishop Lowth's translation.

this passage of prophecy, we will merely point out those circumstances which require particular attention.

The person here spoken of as the servant of God, is the MESSIAH, considered as *Man*. The prophet foretels, that he should be raised to glory, but should first endure such unparalleled sufferings as would excite the wonder of the world; and he should sprinkle, with the dew of his doctrine and with baptism, many nations; that even kings should be silent through astonishment at the relation of the wonderful circumstances attending him, and think them worthy of their most serious consideration: yet numbers would remain incredulous, and disbelieve the report which the prophets should make, that the *ARM of the LORD* was manifested in him. For though the MESSIAH, according to his human nature, would proceed (as the prophet had before predicted) from the root of Jesse, and be the son or lineal descendant of *David*, he should bear no marks of royalty; and so far from being desired for a *King* by the Jews, he should be despised and rejected: and instead of possessing a greater share of worldly blessings than other men, his life would be a continual scene of affliction, as he would suffer not only in his own person, but would also take a benevolent share in all the pain and sorrow to which the whole race of mankind are subject; and at last submit to an ignominious death, which many should regard as a punishment inflicted on him by God for his crimes, and call him a malefactor.

To prevent these misapprehensions, the prophet was inspired to assign the cause why these sufferings were to fall on the MESSIAH; and thus we learn, that he was required to endure them for the sake of *mankind*, who, having offended JEHOVAH, and being unable to make atonement for their own sins, stood in need

of a *propitiatory sacrifice* to be offered in their stead: therefore God graciously resolved to accept his life as such, instead of condemning all sinners to eternal death.

It was farther revealed by the Prophet, that the MESSIAH would bear every affliction with the most exemplary meekness; that no advocate would appear to plead his cause; and that after he had suffered an ignominious death, his enemies would appoint him a grave with the wicked, but that he should notwithstanding be buried in the sepulchre of the rich.

Thus far the prophet, according to the fore-knowledge of God, foretold the *exaltation* of CHRIST, his preceding *humiliation*, *sufferings*, *death* and *burial*, and also his *intercession*. He was then inspired to add a divine promise, that if the MESSIAH would *willingly* make this *propitiatory sacrifice*, he should after his death see a seed (meaning, as we may suppose, his disciples and followers) springing as it were, from him, agreeably to our LORD's comparison of himself to a grain of wheat*; and that this seed should, through their belief of his doctrine, prolong their days (even as the Gospel teaches us) to eternal ages. In this manner were the gracious purposes of God for the *redemption of mankind* to prosper in the hands of the MESSIAH; whilst the consequences of his *humiliation*, *sorrow*, *sufferings*, and *death*, should afford him the highest satisfaction; and his faithful followers, who would be many, should be *justified* or *accepted as righteous* through the knowledge of him, because he would make the *atonement* required by divine justice for the sins of mankind, by offering *himself in their stead*: and thus restore all who should believe in him,

* See Sect. xii.

and comply with the terms of salvation offered by him, to the favour of God, who would regard them as righteous for *his sake*. This gracious promise to the MESSIAH concludes with an assurance, that many should, through Divine influence, adhere to him, and that even the most mighty nations should be converted to the belief of him : because, when he might have claimed an *exemption from death* as his due, he *willingly* “ poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bore the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Is it possible to draw a more exact representation of the MESSIAH, than is exhibited in this passage of prophecy, or to give a more satisfactory explanation of the purpose of his sufferings ? It perfectly accords with the narrative of our LORD's life and doctrine written by the Evangelists, and is not applicable to any other person who was ever born into the world. The doctrine of the Apostles, after the descent of the HOLY GHOST, illustrates it more fully.

There are many parts of the prophecies, besides those already introduced, which might with great propriety be interwoven in our LORD's history ; as they shew the admirable connexion there is between the *Old* and *New* TESTAMENTS, and prove that they were dictated by the same Spirit. The *Prophets* inform us what the MESSIAH *would* do and suffer ; the *Evangelists* relate what he actually *did* and *suffered*.

Whoever reads the history of our LORD will perceive, that the events which befel him were such as might *naturally* have been expected, considering his situation, and the characters and power of his opponents, and that his words and actions were suited to each occasion with the exactest propriety : yet we are frequently told, that
5
particular

particular circumstances befel him, that *the prophecies might be fulfilled*; and our LORD repeatedly declared, he did such and such things because the Scriptures *must* be fulfilled, and thus it *must be*.

At first sight these expressions convey an idea that our LORD's enemies were *compelled* to persecute him, and that he had no *free will*; but on consideration they prove, that he certainly had this distinguishing privilege of human nature, which could alone give a *merit* to his sufferings; that his enemies, though not *impelled* by the FATHER to commit such outrages, were, through the wise disposition of Divine Providence, instrumental towards effecting the very purpose they meant to defeat, the *glorification of the SON of GOD*.

When our LORD's actions were properly *Divine*, he certainly acted and spake according to the impulse of the GODHEAD dwelling in him; but in particulars relating to his *human nature*, he seems to have constantly made the Scriptures the rule for his conduct. Such parts as were designed for the *generality of mankind* were not comprehensive enough for him, as a *perfect and exact* obedience to the Divine will in *every instance of his life* was requisite; therefore the HOLY SPIRIT dwelling in him, dictated what he should do and say, under trials which should have baffled the strength of *human reason*: and our LORD, instructed by the GODHEAD, who dictated these directions, to understand them, accommodated his behaviour and discourse to *them*, instead of following the suggestions of *reason*; by which mean he testified to the world his *obedience to the Divine will*, and gave an example for the imitation of his followers; and also proved, that he regarded the Scriptures, and the revelations of the DEITY made to his own soul, as of *equal authority*. Let us then imitate

tate his blessed example, and have recourse to the *SCRIPTURES* for *rules of life*, especially in conflicting trials. When *human reason* fails, and the counsel of men is of no avail, the *BOOK OF GOD* will afford us certain direction; for we may find something in the *general instructions given to mankind*, either of precept or example, that will exactly suit our case; which the *Holy Spirit*, if we fervently pray for it, will, by his secret influence, teach us to apply, and we shall learn how to do the will of our *HEAVENLY FATHER* on all occasions.

As the history of our *LORD's* death, and the prophecies relating to his sufferings have been related, it is needless to point out how exactly every circumstance predicted concerning him was accomplished. We will not, therefore, at present take a retrospect of them, but return to the sepulchre, and see whether our *LORD* fulfilled his predictions, that he should rise again from the dead.

SECTION XLIII.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS—HE APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE.—PETER AND JOHN VISIT THE SEPULCHRE.

From Matt. Chap. xxviii.—Mark, xvi.—Luke, xxiv. John, xx.

AND after the sabbath, the first day of the week, very early in the morning, when it was yet dark, they went unto the sepulchre. And Mary the mother of James and Salome, and certain others with them, came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun, bringing the spices which they had prepared, that they might anoint the body of *JESUS*.

And

And they said amongst themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre? for it was very great. And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away.

For behold there had been a great earthquake; for an angel of the LORD descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow.

And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

When Mary Magdalene saw that the stone was taken away, she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to that other disciple whom JESUS loved, and saith, They have taken away the LORD, and we know not where they have laid him.

And some of the women entering into the sepulchre, found not the body of the LORD JESUS.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

And as they were afraid, and bowed their faces to the earth, one of the angels said unto the women, Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek JESUS who was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead?

He is not here, for he is risen, as he said, Come, see the place where the LORD lay.

Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

Go quickly and tell his disciples, and Peter, that he is risen from the dead; and behold, he goeth before you into Galilee.

And

And the women remembered his words, and they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy ; and did run to bring his disciples word. Neither said they any thing to any man, for they were afraid.

When Mary Magdalene had told Peter, and the disciple whom Jesus loved, that they had taken away the LORD : Peter went forth and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

So they ran both together : and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying ; yet went he not in.

Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes lying ; and he went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie ; and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself, and he wondered at that which was come to pass.

Then went in also that other disciple, who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.

For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead.

Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping, and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre,

And seeth two angels in white, sitting the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

JESUS

JESUS said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

JESUS saith unto her, MARY. She turned herself and said, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.

JESUS saith unto her, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

And as the other women went to tell his disciples, behold JESUS met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Then said JESUS unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren, that they shall go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

And they returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

It was Mary Magdalene, out of whom the LORD cast seven devils, that went and told them that had been with him, as they wept.

And they, when they had heard he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

And Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, told these things unto the apostles.

And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they believed them not.

Now when the women were going to tell the apostles, behold

behold some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.

And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,

Saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night and stole him away while we slept.

And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.

So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported amongst the Jews until this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The pious women who had formed the design of embalming our LORD's body were very solicitous to execute it; therefore, as soon as the sabbath was over, they made farther preparations, and set out to go to the sepulchre early in the morning, even while it was yet dark, so that they arrived there by the time of sun rising. Though the tomb had been sealed the evening before and a guard set, it does not appear that the women had heard of this circumstance; which would, in all probability, have intimidated them from pursuing their intention of entering into it. Knowing that the stone was large, they were apprehensive their united efforts would not be sufficient to remove it; and consulted among themselves who they should apply to for this purpose. While they were on the way, between the dawning of the day and the rising of the sun, a great earthquake happened on the spot where the sepulchre stood; and an ANGEL descended from heaven, who rolled away the stone, on which he seated himself, to the great amazement and terror of the guards. During the time of their conster-

nation,

nation, our LORD (we may conclude) rose from the dead, but did not appear to the guards, as they were not proper witnesses of his resurrection. It is likely, that as soon as the spirits of the soldiers revived, they fled from the spot where they had heard and seen such wonderful things, and the *angel* disappeared. Immediately after their departure the women arrived, who found to their astonishment the stone rolled away. Not recollecting our LORD's repeated assurances that he should rise again, they apprehended the body to have been taken away by his enemies : and Mary Magdalene, who entertained the most grateful remembrance of the benefits formerly conferred on her by our SAVIOUR, in great agitation of mind at this disappointment, ran to acquaint two of the Apostles, and consult with them what was to be done : but some of the women who remained behind resolved to enter into the sepulchre, where the matter was explained to them by two *angels*, who shewed them the very place where the body had been laid, and recalled to their minds what our LORD himself had so frequently predicted ; and then commanded them to go and carry this joyful news to his disciples. The women immediately departed, but their agitation was at first so great, that they did not relate what they had seen and heard to any whom they met by the way. Shortly after they were gone, *Mary Magdalene* arrived at the sepulchre, bringing with her *Peter* and *John*, who, as soon as they heard the body was missing, ran with all possible dispatch to the place, in order to examine into the circumstances of this alarming affair ; which indicated, that the malice of our LORD's persecutors still remained in full force.

Peter soon convinced himself that the body was actually gone, but knew not how to account for the order
in

in which the linen clothes and napkins were disposed. *John*, after having taken a view of them, though persuaded in his own mind that his LORD was risen from the dead, did not communicate his opinion to his companion at that time, resolving to have still farther proofs of it; but returned with *Peter*, that they might confer in private on this wonderful event.

Mary, who was overwhelmed with sorrow that her pious purpose was defeated, and apprehensive that the body of her beloved LORD, instead of being embalmed with fragrant spices, would be treated by his enemies with the utmost indignity, and perhaps exposed as food for the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, stood weeping without; but at length stooping down, and casting an affectionate look towards the place where the body had lain, the *angels* again became visible, but veiled their heavenly lustre under an human form; and she beheld them sitting one at the head, the other at the feet, of the niche in which the sacred corpse had been deposited. The *angels* certainly had a power of becoming visible or invisible as occasion required, therefore were not seen by *Peter* and *John*. Whether *Mary* perceived them to be *angels*, or took them for *young men*, is uncertain; but it seems * “ she was so immersed in grief at not being able to find the body of *JESUS*, that she took little or no notice of this extraordinary appearance, and answered the *angels* without any emotion, and without quitting the object upon which her mind was wholly fixed, till her attention was awakened by the well-known voice of her Master, calling her by her name.” What must have been the transports of her soul at this instant? Whilst she was deploring his death, and grieving that his body was not to be found, *JESUS* stood before her,

* West on the Resurrection.

and kindly accosted her. At first she knew him not; but when she fixed her eyes on him, she was thoroughly convinced that it was CHRIST himself, and would have embraced his feet, but that he commanded her not to stay to do so at present; intimating, that she would have other opportunities, as he had not left the world; and he directed her to go immediately to his disciples, and carry a message from him: which would serve at once to convince them he entertained the same affectionate regard for them as ever, and revive their hopes, that the promises he had repeatedly made them would be fulfilled*.

We read, that other women were commanded by the heavenly messengers who appeared to them, to tell the Apostles that CHRIST was risen from the dead, &c. It is likely that they went a different way into the city; for they did not meet *Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John*. After our LORD had dismissed *Mary Magdalene* he met the other women, whom he affectionately accosted, and also permitted them to pay their homage to him; during which time *Mary* proceeded on her way, and was ready to give *her* testimony concerning our LORD's resurrection with *them*; which she could not have done, had she staid to indulge the effusions of her joy as she wished to do. It is likely, that *all the Apostles*, in consequence of the report made by *Peter and John*, were assembled together by the time the women arrived; but so thoroughly were their spirits dejected, and their hopes disappointed, by the untimely death of their LORD, that they were ready to impute what the women related to the power of imagination; and resolved to suspend their belief, till they had more convincing proofs of so

* Compare this message with our LORD's discourse to his disciples in Section xxvii.

important a fact, and were satisfied of the reality of it by the *testimony of their own senses*.

* While these things were transacting, some of the guards, a little recovered from their consternation, arrived in the city; and, in order to excuse themselves, made their report to the chief priests concerning the earthquake and the vision of the angel. This news must undoubtedly have thrown the Council into great confusion; but neither they nor the soldiers were converted, by what the one saw or the other heard. The High Priests were under a *judaical blindness*, as a punishment from God for their obstinacy in rejecting the MESSIAH; and the soldiers being *heathens*, might think that JESUS was the son of some deity, the *God of the Jews*, with whom they had no concern, who brought him to life again.

The High Priests were in the utmost perplexity, what measures to pursue on this extraordinary occasion, and immediately assembled the Sanhedrim; who, after holding a consultation, could devise no method to prevent the people's belief of the resurrection, but bribing the guards to spread a false report, that "*the disciples had come by night and stolen the body;*" for had they accused the soldiers of neglect, they could not have proved it to the satisfaction of the Roman governor, whose conscience being in some degree awakened by his own observations on JESUS during his trial, and the prodigies which happened at his death, he would most likely have acquitted them, and by this means confirmed the belief of the resurrection: the Council, therefore, gave the soldiers a considerable sum of money to keep the matter *secret*, promising to exert their interest with the governor

* Doddridge's Family Expositor.

in their behalf, should they be in danger of punishment for sleeping on their watch, which was death by the Roman law. The guards for the sake of the bribe consented, and those Jews who resolved to disbelieve the resurrection, gave credit to their report; thus proving, that *prejudiced persons* will often believe the greatest *inconsistencies*, if they have the least tendency to confirm their own opinions. “ * It certainly was very improbable that the disciples, who were weak ignorant men, full of the popular opinions and superstition of their countrymen, which all their Master’s discourses had not eradicated, should engage in so desperate a design as to steal away the body, in opposition to the combined power of the Jews and Romans. They had no temptation to commit such a theft. The dead body could do them no good; or if it could have done them any, they had no hope of succeeding in their attempt. A dead body is not to be removed by sleight of hand; it requires many hands to move it. Besides, the stone at the mouth of the sepulchre was to be removed, which could not be done *silently*, or by men walking upon tiptoe to prevent discovery; so that if the guards had really been asleep, it was hardly possible but that the rolling away of the stone, moving the body, and the hurry and confusion of carrying it off, must have awakened them. But supposing the thing practicable, yet the attempt was such as the disciples, consistently with their *own notions*, could not undertake. They continued all their Master’s lifetime to expect to see him a *temporal prince*; but, after he was dead, they could not expect to make a king of his lifeless corpse, if they could get it into their power.

* Bishop Sherlock’s Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of JESUS.

Or, if they even expected his resurrection, they could not suppose it depended on *their* having his body in their *own possession*. And in respect to the *guards*, if they really were *asleep*, it was not possible for them to give so punctual an account of the transaction, and know that the disciples had stolen him, since they saw nobody.

We perceive then, how very inconsistent the story was which the Council put into the mouths of the soldiers. We will now consider the report which they originally made to the chief priests.

The soldiers asserted, that they guarded the sepulchre agreeably to the orders they had received, and continued quietly on their watch till the dawning of the day; when suddenly there was a great earthquake, and the stone, which the High Priests had so carefully scaled, was rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre by a glorious Being, whose radiant appearance so dazzled their eyes, that they could behold no other object, but fell on the ground like dead men; and when they recovered a little from their consternation and terror, they fled away, not daring to remain on a spot where such prodigies had happened. This account is perfectly consistent with our SAVIOUR's declaration, that he was the SON of GOD, *and should rise again the third day*; for though it was impossible that his disciples should steal his body away, and absurd to suppose they would attempt it, yet if he was the SON of GOD, it might reasonably be expected that Divine power would be exerted to break open the sepulchre, which the guards certainly could not resist.

Our LORD's prediction, that he *should rise again the third day*, was exactly fulfilled.

CHRIST expired on the cross about three o'clock on Friday afternoon, he lay in the grave all Saturday, and

rose from the dead very early in the morning of the day following. This agrees with our usual mode of reckoning the *third day*, in which the first and the last are included. Our LORD lay long enough to prove the reality of his death, and revived soon enough to preserve his body from corruption; which, as it was pierced with thorns, torn with scourges, transfixed with nails, and pierced with a spear, would have been, according to the course of nature, very soon in a state of putrefaction.

SECTION XLIV.

JESUS APPEARS TO TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES IN THEIR
WAY TO EMMAUS.

From Luke, Chap. xxiv.—John, xx.

AND behold two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs.

And they talked together of all these things which had happened.

And it came to pass, that while they communed together, and reasoned, JESUS himself drew near, and went with them.

But their eyes were holden, that they should not know him.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk and are sad?

And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering, said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto

unto him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God, and all the people.

And how the chief priests, and our rulers, delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

But we trusted that it had been he, which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done.

Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre.

And when they found not his body, they came, saying, That they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

And certain of them which were with us, went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said, but him they saw not.

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

Ought not CHRIST to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.

And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went; and he made as though he would have gone further.

But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

And it came to pass, as he sat, at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and break, and gave to them.

And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The two disciples mentioned in this section, had either left Jerusalem before any of the women, to whom our LORD appeared, made their report, or else had heard it imperfectly related, and only been informed, that they had seen a vision of angels, who told them that JESUS was risen from the dead. As they walked along, they debated on the subject, lamenting the death of their beloved Master; and endeavouring, by their own reason, to reconcile his sufferings with what the Prophets had foretold concerning the MESSIAH. JESUS knowing their affection for him, and their sincere desire to be acquainted with the *truth*, graciously vouchsafed to satisfy their doubts, but did not discover himself to them at first; and as his appearance was quite unexpected, and they were too intent on the subject of their conversation to examine his person, they did not know him. Our LORD's motive for keeping himself unknown was, that he might, before he gave them a *sensible* proof of his resurrection, convince them, that the Prophets had foretold all the wonderful circumstances concerning which their minds were at present so perplexed. Besides the reasons above-mentioned for their not knowing him, there might also be a supernatural cause; it is intimated by the Evangelist, that our LORD threw a mist before their *corporeal* eyes, that he might remove from their *internal* sight that strong delusion, which held them from perceiving the true import of those *types* and *prophecies* by which his sufferings, death, and resurrection,

tion, were foreshown: he disguised *himself*, but laid open the *Scriptures*, which, till then, they had not rightly understood.

It is needless to repeat all the predictions contained in the Prophets and Psalms. Enough has been already said concerning them to convey an idea of the great plan of Providence and grace, in the deliverance of mankind from the power of *death* and *sin*, by the MESSIAH, which was gradually opened in a succession of prophecies through the several ages of the world; each of which, in proportion as the accomplishment of the wonderful and gracious purpose of God advanced, grew more explicit and particular, till they came at last to point out the very times and person of the expected DELIVERER*.

What the Prophets had written concerning the sufferings of the MESSIAH, was very clear and express, and exactly and circumstantially accomplished in CHRIST; yet the Jews had so blinded themselves by the expectation of a *temporal kingdom*, that they did not understand them; and even the Apostles were unwilling to give up the pleasing and flattering hopes of seeing their Master seated on the throne of Israel, dispensing honours to his friends, and laws to the whole world; therefore his death must have been a very great disappointment to them. Our LORD first reproved his disciples for being so unwilling to believe any thing contrary to their own prejudices, though revealed by the SPIRIT of God; and then explained to them, that the redemption promised to *Abraham* and the other *Patriarchs*, was not a redemption of the *children of Israel* only from their

* See Bishop Sherlock's Discourse on Prophecy; see also West on the Resurrection. From these two authorities I have borrowed a great part of the sections relating to the Resurrection.

wordly enemies and oppressors, but the redemption of all mankind from the power and penalty of sin, to be effected by the MESSIAH's fulfilling all righteousness; on which condition, eternal happiness was originally offered to the human race in Adam; but being forfeited by him, the covenant was renewed in CHRIST, on condition *of his offering up his life a sacrifice for sin*, by paying the *penalty of death* which Adam first *incurred*, and all mankind had continued to *deserve*: paying it, not as a *debtor*, for he was without sin, but as a *surety*, who willingly and freely took upon himself to make good the failings of others. Of this plan the *death* of CHRIST was a necessary part, and so was his *resurrection from the dead*; by which having vanquished that enemy, who brought death and sin into the world, he was to be put in possession of that throne which was to endure for ever; and he was, like David, appointed of God to reign, not over the Jewish nation only, but over all those of every nation of the world, who should, like the Jews, enter into a covenant with him to keep his commandments.

Having, by an exposition of Moses and the Prophets, which made their hearts burn within them, stripped off those veils and colours which the Scribes and Pharisees had laid over them, and convinced the disciples that, according to the design of God, it was necessary for the MESSIAH to *suffer and die*, our LORD proceeded to *prove* his resurrection, by making himself known to them; he, therefore, accepted their pressing invitation to pass the evening with them, and seating himself at the head of the table as the master of the family, instead of an invited guest, he made use of his customary form of breaking bread and blessing it (which we may judge was peculiar to him), and at the same time removed the
mist

mist which was cast before their eyes, so that they immediately knew him to be their dear Master; and while they were preparing to acknowledge him as such, he suddenly withdrew himself from them, the purpose of his joining them being completely effected; they now no longer questioned the impropriety of his sufferings, or doubted his resurrection, but rather wondered at themselves, that they had not discovered him before, from the spirit and energy of his discourse.

Whoever will read the Scriptures, either of the *Old* or *New Testament*, with an unprejudiced mind, and a real desire to derive spiritual instruction from them, will experience in some degree, the same kind of sensation which the disciples felt whilst our SAVIOUR unfolded the law and the prophets.

No study can be so interesting and delightful; and that heart must be dead indeed to the best feelings of humanity, which does not glow with gratitude, hope, and delight, at the display of the infinite goodness and compassion of GOD the FATHER *of the universe*, the benevolence of JESUS CHRIST *his beloved SON*, and the prospect of an everlasting inheritance in those blessed regions, where there will be found fulness of joy and blessedness for evermore.

SECTION XLV.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO HIS APOSTLES.

From Luke, Chap. xxiv.—Mark, xvi.—John, xx.

AND they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them,

Saying, The LORD is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

And as they thus spake, the doors being shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst of them: and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them; and upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen him after he was risen.

Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.

And he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved CHRIST to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

And

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And ye are witnesses of these things.

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Impatient to communicate the happy news of his resurrection, the two disciples hastened back unto Jerusalem, where they found the Apostles assembled, who had, it seems, been just informed by Peter, that the LORD had appeared to him, on which they were then conversing when the two disciples entered.

As the Evangelists have not given a particular account of this appearance, it is not possible to ascertain when and where it happened; but we learn from St. Peter's own writings, that he was the first *man* that was favoured with a view of his SAVIOUR after he rose from the dead: therefore it must have been previous to his joining the disciples, on their way to Emmaus.

Notwithstanding these repeated testimonies, that JESUS was actually risen from the dead, there were some in the company whose prejudices were so strong and their faith so weak, that they neither believed Peter nor the other disciple; though the generality of them were convinced that the LORD was risen indeed. How then must they be astonished to see him standing in the midst of them, and to hear him accost them with his usual benignant salutation, *Peace be unto you*; intimating, that he forgave their cowardice in forsaking him, and would still consider them as friends; and at the same time proving, that he continued to be possessed of mi-

raculous power, by entering the room notwithstanding they had fastened the doors. It is possible that our LORD might cause the door to open without noise, and unperceived by his disciples, who were engaged in earnest discourse, and they might not know of his entrance till they beheld him standing in the midst. His unexpected appearance amazed and terrified them exceedingly ; and many suspected, that they saw only a spirit, or a phantom of the imagination. To satisfy their doubts, and convince them that he had a real body, our LORD invited them to handle and examine him. To give them the most satisfactory proof that he had the same body that was nailed to the cross, he shewed them his hands and feet, which still retained the marks of the nails ; and for their further conviction he ate in their presence. So much compassion did our LORD shew for their infirmity, and so much care did he take, that not even a shadow of a doubt should remain in their minds, upon a point of the utmost importance to the business he came about ! Then gently upbraiding them with their hardness of heart, in being so unwilling to admit the testimony of those who declared that they had seen him, whose veracity they had no reason to doubt, he assured them of his gracious forgiveness, and of his intention of sending them to preach the Gospel ; to qualify them for which, it was necessary they should be inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT.

It is observable, that our LORD breathed on his Apostles, as a token that the HOLY SPIRIT was to be conveyed to them through him ; and in consequence of this their *understandings* were *opened*, so that they were able to comprehend those parts of the scriptures which had been hitherto dark and obscure : and they now clearly perceived, by the marks and characters of the

MESSIAH

MESSIAH to which he constantly referred them, that it was agreeable to the design of GOD that the MESSIAH should suffer death, and rise again the third day; that repentance, and faith in CHRIST, were the terms on which redemption from sin was offered to mankind; and that it was their peculiar business, as his Apostles or Ambassadors, to make these conditions known to people of all nations, as they were chosen witnesses selected for this very purpose.

SECTION XLVI.

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS—THE LORD
APPEARS TO HIM.

From John, Chap. xx.

BUT Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

The other disciples therefore said unto him. We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My LORD and my God!

JESUS saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From our LORD's reproof of Thomas, implied in the words, *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*, it is evident, that our LORD thought his disciples had sufficient cause to believe him to be risen from the dead, even before he shewed himself to them; and we have reason to think St. John did so.

As our LORD had declared he should rise from the dead the third day, they might, from the first report that the body was missing, have concluded that he was risen; the sight of the napkin and winding sheet laid in such order, shewed that there must have been a *resurrection*; for who that should *steal* a body, would stay to take off such a quantity of linen and fold it up? They could not suppose, that either friends or enemies would have proceeded in this manner. The *rolling away of the stone*, was another proof that a miracle had been wrought; for had it been done by human force they would have heard of it, as many people must have been concerned in it; and for what purpose but the *resurrection*, should such an event have happened? The prodigies which had attended our LORD's death, gave reason to expect that the same Divine power would deliver him from the grave. The information of the women, that angels had acquainted them JESUS was risen, ought to have gained credit, as it accorded with our LORD's own predictions, and those of the ancient prophets.

That they might not suppose that JESUS was taken into heaven as *Enoch* and *Elijah* were, they were acquainted by Mary Magdalen that she had *seen* the LORD,
who

who assured her, that he was not yet ascended to the FATHER; and he at the same time desired her to remind them of a conversation, which he had with them the night before he was betrayed, in which he assured them, that he *should* go to the FATHER; and that in consequence of his doing so, the COMFORTER would come unto them. They were soon after informed by the other women, that they had not only *seen* the LORD, but *touched* him, and that he bid them tell his brethren that *he would go before them into Galilee*: nothing therefore was wanting to satisfy all their scruples, but to see him themselves; and till they did so, they resolved to suspend their belief, and treated all these visions as so many idle tales.

As it was necessary the Apostles should have the fullest conviction of the resurrection, that they might convince others, our LORD at length vouchsafed to give them the very evidence they desired; having first prepared them for it by the report of *Peter*, and the two disciples to whom he previously appeared; but they now doubted the testimony of their *own senses*, and supposed that they beheld a *spirit*. Our LORD soon convinced them of their mistake, by submitting his body to be handled by them; and as a farther proof of his being alive, he ate before them: and having given them every *sensible* demonstration of the reality of his resurrection, he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and then left them for eight days, that they might deliberately apply themselves to the examination of them, in order to root out their mistaken prejudices, and establish a well-grounded rational faith in their stead, which was particularly necessary for those who were to be witnesses of all these things to the world.

As Thomas was one of those who were selected to
bear

bear testimony to the circumstances of our LORD's life, death, and resurrection, it was proper that he should have an equal knowledge of them with the rest; which was granted him in such a manner, as to prove beyond dispute, that JESUS was risen, not only with the *same body*, but possessed of the same *divine knowledge* of the hearts of men, which he had repeatedly taught them to attribute to the GODHEAD *dwelling in him*. Thomas made an ample profession of faith, and acknowledged the BEING he beheld not only as his LORD, but his GOD; and no longer desired to put his fingers in the print of the nails, &c. for he found sufficient proofs of the resurrection without doing so.

From the example of Thomas we learn, that it is our duty, if doubts arise in our mind, to examine all the evidence which is afforded us of divine truths, and not to prescribe to GOD, in respect to particulars, which *we* think necessary to prove them. Had Thomas fully considered what the other apostles told him, he might, from their accounts, have been thoroughly convinced, that JESUS was risen from the dead: and even at this distance of time, every Christian, who will give their writings a fair and candid examination, may obtain perfect satisfaction from *them*.

“ That the Apostles and Evangelists were authors of those Scriptures, which are now received under their names, we have the concurrent attestation of all the earliest writers of the church, deduced by uninterrupted traditions from the very times of the Apostles *.”

If the precepts and examples of JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles, were to be the rules by which all those

* The reader is here directed, by the author I copy from, to read Prefatory Discourses of Dr. Whitby's Annotations on the Gospels, Acts, &c. Also L'Abadie de la Religion Chrétienne, tom. II.

who,

who, in succeeding ages, should believe in him, were to govern themselves, it is reasonable to suppose that the same HOLY SPIRIT, which incited and enabled the Apostles to preach the Gospel, and bear witness to the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, in every nation of the known world, should likewise incite and enable them to deliver down to posterity, in a method the least liable to uncertainty and error, that testimony, and those precepts upon which the faith and practice of after-times were to be established; especially, when all revelation respecting the doctrines and system of the Gospel was confined to the Apostles, and consequently ended with them (as we shall have occasion to shew).

We cannot doubt, but that those Christians who were converted to Christianity by the first preaching of the Apostles themselves, and who were to transmit to succeeding ages, that Gospel upon which, according to their belief, the salvation of mankind depended, would be solicitous to obtain in *writing* from the Apostles, the evidence and doctrines of the Christian faith; and it is natural to imagine, that the persons in whose hands such sacred and invaluable treasures were deposited, would preserve and guard them with the utmost fidelity and care; would impart *copies* of them to their brethren, who could not have access to the *originals*, and see that those copies were transcribed with all the exactness possible. The same care, we may suppose, would be taken by those who should *translate* them into the several languages spoken by Christians of different nations, who did not understand that in which the Apostles wrote.

It appears from the works of some of the first Christian writers, that the Gospels *were* written by the Apostles, and dispersed as above supposed, and that the original copies of them were preserved for ages. There
is

is not the least reason to imagine, that these writings were forged, for the deception must have been discovered; neither would such numbers of people have been influenced by them to the hazard of their lives and fortunes, if they had not been thoroughly persuaded of their *authenticity*.

Since, then, we have the greatest reason to conclude, that the Apostles and Evangelists *did* commit to writing what they knew concerning CHRIST and his doctrine, and we have no cause to doubt, but that the Gospels which bear their names, were originally written by them, we should carefully study them; by which means we shall be convinced, that the doctrines they teach are certainly *divine*; for they relate to things which, without *divine revelation*, could not have been discovered by *human reason*.

But we will not enter into a particular examination of the *proofs* that the Gospels are *genuine*, as it would interrupt the thread of the history; and it is to be hoped that none, who have read our LORD's history, will ever suspect the contrary; for it is a dreadful thing to doubt, in a matter of such infinite importance to our immortal souls. Let us rather receive, with the utmost reverence and thankfulness, the evidence which God has graciously afforded us; remembering, that there are *peculiar blessings* in store, for those *who have not seen, and yet have believed*.

SECTION XLVII.

OUR LORD APPEARS TO PETER AND OTHER DISCIPLES, AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS.

From John, Chap. xxi.

AFTER these things, JESUS shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias: and on this wise shewed he himself:

There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.

But when the morning was now come, JESUS stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was JESUS.

Then JESUS saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.

Therefore that disciple whom JESUS loved, saith unto Peter, It is the LORD. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the LORD, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked), and did cast himself into the sea.

And the other disciples came in a little ship (for they were

were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits) dragging the net with fishes.

As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

JESUS saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

JESUS saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the LORD.

JESUS then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.

This is now the third time that JESUS shewed himself to his disciples after that he was risen from the dead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When all the Apostles had received thorough conviction of the resurrection of JESUS, so that not a scruple remained on their minds, they left *Jerusalem* in order to go into *Galilee*, where he had appointed to meet them.

Simon Peter, Thomas, and the others who are mentioned in this section, seem to have arrived there before the rest.

From this part of our LORD's history, we may derive much useful instruction. In the first place we may observe, that on this occasion he appeared to his disciples when they were engaged in their *worldly business*, that he did not *interrupt* them, but through his divine power gave them miraculous assistance. From hence we are taught

taught to expect a divine blessing on our honest industry in the different occupations of life; for what was done for the Apostles in a *miraculous* way, will be done for every sincere Christian in the usual course of Providence, as far as may be conducive to his eternal happiness.

We may next remark, that the disciples, though they went a fishing at the proper hour, toiled and fatigued themselves to no purpose; but whilst they were doing so, their LORD provided a repast, and also at length crowned their labours with success.

It frequently happens in common life, that men are perplexed and disappointed, notwithstanding their utmost prudence, diligence, and skill, are exerted; and that when they have no prospect of success left, an unexpected turn of fortune throws into their laps, as it were, greater advantages than those they missed. The incident we are now considering, teaches us to attribute these happy vicissitudes, not to *blind chance*, but an *overruling Providence*. Our heavenly FATHER knoweth not only of what we *do* stand in need, but what we *shall* want; he also knoweth what we *shall* deserve from his hands, and the proper time to bestow it. Sometimes he gives wings to his blessings, that they may meet us even while we are performing the duty they are intended to reward; and sometimes he delays them, that our patience may be exercised, and that we may be the more sensible of his divine bounty.

Our LORD's appearance to his disciples was very seasonable, and verified the Psalmist's expression, "*heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*" This circumstance teaches us to hope in the midst of disappointment.

Our LORD was taken by his disciples for a *stranger*, and discovered himself *gradually*; from hence we learn,
that

that our SAVIOUR may be nearer to us than we imagine, and preparing *comfort* for us when we think ourselves forgotten by him. He asked them if they had any meat, to encourage them to make their wants known to him; and prepared refreshment for them, to shew his compassion: thus instructing his followers to *seek out* modest want, and relieve it to the utmost of their ability.

Skilled as the Apostles were in fishing, they doubtless cast the net in the most likely place to catch fish. By directing them to remove it to a particular spot, our LORD shewed, that not even the inhabitants of the water were hidden from his sight; and that he was raised *in power* as the LORD; and also, that he has a regard to the *temporal* wants of his people; and that *divine Providence* extends to the minutest circumstances. By the success of the Apostles' obedience we are taught, that we may expect a blessing, if we make the word of our SAVIOUR the rule of our actions.

SECTION XLVIII.

OUR LORD'S DISCOURSE WITH PETER.

So when they had dined, JESUS saith to Simon Peter, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, LORD; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith unto him again the second time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, LORD; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

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He saith unto him the third time, Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, LORD, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved, following; (which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said LORD, which is he that betrayeth thee?)

Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, LORD, and what shall this man do?

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die: but, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When the Apostles had made a plentiful meal on the provisions with which our LORD had so seasonably supplied them, he addressed himself to Simon Peter; and alluding

alluding to his former professions of love and fidelity, demanded whether he would now maintain, that he loved him more than the rest of his disciples. Peter's answer shews, that he was humbled and improved by his fall. He appealed to his LORD's knowledge of his heart, that he felt the most fervent affection for him; but made no vehement professions of it, nor presumed to say, that he loved him better than the rest of his brethren. Jesus, knowing that Peter wished to give a sensible proof of his affection, intimated that the most acceptable manner of testifying his regard, would be to discharge with fidelity his apostolic office, and pay attention to the weakest members of his church; not only instructing the illiterate part of the community, but extending his care even to children.

To impress with the greater force, upon the mind of Peter, the duties belonging to him as a minister of the Gospel, our LORD repeated his question and injunction, requiring him to be careful of *the whole flock* (as he kindly denominated his disciples), and to suffer none to be ignorant of divine truths, whom he had power or opportunities to instruct.

That it might never be forgotten by him or any one present, our LORD a third time repeated his question, Peter, *lovest thou me?* Peter, reflecting with regret that he had ever given cause to his beloved Master to doubt his attachment, was greatly grieved, and earnestly professed his profoundest regard; appealing once more to our LORD's knowledge of the human heart for the proof of his professions, which enabled him to distinguish between frailty and treachery. To prove that he did so, our LORD confirmed him in his apostolic office, by a repetition of his command to FEED HIS SHEEP. He then assured Peter, that he should be strengthened to perform his duty and prove his love, not only by *labours* but *suf-*

ferings, and die a martyr in his cause. Our LORD therefore exhorted Peter to recollect the example he had set him, and endeavour to imitate it both in his life and death. This Peter was now ready to do, and prepared to attend his LORD, resolving never to forsake him or his cause. Turning about he observed, that John was also determined to follow his LORD at all events; he was therefore curious to know, whether this beloved disciple would likewise die a martyr: but as this was no immediate concern of Peter's, our LORD did not think fit to gratify his curiosity, but made him an ambiguous answer; which gave rise to a conjecture, that John would never die. But this was built upon a mistake.

In our LORD's behaviour to Peter, we have a representation of the kindness of God to penitent sinners, and an example to behave with meekness towards those who have formerly injured us and repented of it. From his injunction to Peter to *feed his lambs*, we may infer, that whoever undertakes the instruction of the young and ignorant in the truths of Christianity, performs acceptable service to our blessed REDEEMER. From his question to Peter, *Lovest thou me?* we may understand that the *love of CHRIST* is necessary to enable ministers of the Gospel to go through the duties of their office. It is observable that our LORD did not at this time invest Peter with any authority over the rest of the Apostles, but merely restored him to his apostolic office which he had forfeited by denying his Master, yet the Papists from this instance, draw an argument for the *Pope's supremacy* derived from Peter.

By our LORD's prophecy that Peter should suffer crucifixion, he at once proved his own knowledge of future events, and Peter's affection for him. The zealous disciple, so far from forsaking his Master, resolved
now

now to adhere to him with inviolable fidelity, let the hazard be ever so great, and obeyed with alacrity our LORD's invitation to follow him. John certainly understood, that CHRIST's call to Peter, "*Follow me,*" extended to all his Apostles, therefore, without waiting for a particular command, he silently prepared to go wherever his beloved LORD should think proper to send him. Peter's curiosity shews the nature of the human mind, which, instead of keeping fixed on *important subjects*, is apt to wander to *useless questions*.

Our LORD's answer teaches us not to concern ourselves with other people's affairs, any farther than our own happiness, or the good of society or individuals requires. Our business is *to follow our SAVIOUR*, to walk in the way that he walked, and to imitate, to the best of our ability, his blessed example.

Many *errors* have arisen in the Church, from *mistaking the words of CHRIST and his Apostles*; we should therefore be very desirous to understand the true meaning of them. The best rule for this purpose is to take them *literally* where we can; and where they are evidently *figurative* or *ambiguous*, to endeavour to discover their import, by comparing them with *plainer* texts of scripture. Some passages, indeed, of the prophetic kind, are unavoidably involved in obscurity, and will remain so, till the events they relate to elucidate them; and others have a reference to things long since past, of a *local* nature, which we cannot comprehend for want of knowing the circumstances to which they referred. Let us not then neglect our *duty*, to attempt the investigation of what is absolutely impenetrable, but apply to ourselves our SAVIOUR's answer to Peter, *What is that to thee? follow thou me.*

This account of what passed at the sea of Tiberias, is

part of the history of our LORD written by St. John; who, to enforce the belief of what he related, added his *solemn attestation* to the *truth* of it. No person was so well acquainted with the particulars of our LORD's life and discourses as this beloved disciple, therefore his testimony is extremely valuable. Let us then pay due attention to it, and be thankful to our blessed Redeemer, that he graciously provided for its being transmitted to us.

SECTION XLIX.

OUR LORD MEETS ALL HIS APOSTLES ON A MOUNTAIN
IN GALILEE.

From Matt. Chap. xxviii.—Mark, xvi.—Acts, i.

THEN the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.

And he was seen of above * five hundred brethren at once. After that he was seen of James.

And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.

And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

And Jesus shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of his Apostles forty days, and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Shortly after our LORD's interview with his Apostles at Jerusalem, the eleven went into Galilee to a certain mountain near the sea of Tiberias, agreeably to his command. As he had already appeared to above twenty people *, the fame of his resurrection was spread abroad ; and, in all probability, his promise of meeting his disciples in Galilee was also made known to numbers not only in Jerusalem, but through Judea: therefore, we may suppose, that on so solemn an occasion a great multitude besides the eleven would collect together; and considering that this was the first time with many of them of their seeing our LORD since his resurrection, it is not to be wondered at, that *some* doubted even the evidence of their own senses. Those to whom he had before given such satisfactory proofs of the *reality of his body*, needed no further conviction, but fell down and worshipped him.

As the circumstances of our LORD's appearance to James are not recorded, it is in vain to conjecture where or when it happened.

* St. Paul, in the 6th verse of the xvth chapter of 1 Corinthians, expressly declares, that our Lord was seen by above 500 brethren at once; and I have inserted this text in the present section, as it throws light on an expression in St. Matthew's Gospel, viz. "but some doubted." It can scarcely be supposed this relates to the Apostles; for they were all thoroughly convinced, that our Lord was risen from the dead in the *same body*; therefore, I have adopted the opinion of Mr. West, that it was on the mountain in Galilee our Lord was seen by above 500 of his disciples.

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There appear to have been several reasons for our LORD's meeting his disciples in Galilee, preferably to any other place. Galilee was the country in which he had resided above 30 years, from his very infancy to the time when he began to preach the kingdom of God. There he began to declare his mission, and in the cities of that region he performed the greatest part of his mighty work ; so that he must certainly have been more known, and have had more followers than in any other region of Judea ; and consequently, was more likely to have the greatest number of competent witnesses in this province.

Galilee was also the native place of most, if not of all his Apostles, to whom a long absence from home might have been very inconvenient at that time, especially when the barley-harvest was either begun or near at hand ; and as they were for a short time left to follow their *worldly occupations*, they would naturally have returned after the passover to their own habitations. Our LORD knowing this, promised before his death that *after he was risen, he would go before them into Galilee* ; which remarkable expression was again made use of by the angel, who appeared to the women after his resurrection ; and our LORD himself commanded them, by the same women, to go into Galilee, with a promise that they should *see him* ; which was intended not to alter any resolution they may be supposed to have formed, but as a confirmation of his former promise, and a strong encouragement to expect the performance of it.

The time was not yet come for them to leave their families and all their connections, in order to devote themselves to the apostolic office : therefore, our LORD permitted them to return back, that they might have an

opportunity of seeing and providing in the best manner they were able for their relations and families, before they took their final leave of them. Besides the Apostles, having their habitations in Galilee, might reside and assemble there without any fear of the persecutors and murderers of their LORD and Master, the chief priests and the Roman governor; for Galilee was in the jurisdiction of Herod.

The purpose of our LORD's appearance on the mountain in Galilee was not merely to prove the reality of his resurrection, but also to declare the accomplishment of those prophecies which foretold that the MESSIAH should have universal dominion; and to make known the reward which should be bestowed on those who paid a willing allegiance to him, and the penalty which should be inflicted on those who wilfully rejected him; *salvation* to the one, *damnation* to the other. The writings of the Apostles will best explain the full import of them.

That believers might have *sensible* demonstrations of the power possessed by him, our LORD promised he would endue them with miraculous gifts. The meaning of this promise was explained by the *completion* of it, as we shall soon have occasion to shew. The terms of admission into our LORD's kingdom upon earth, viz. *faith* and *baptism*, have been explained.

We are told in this section, that our LORD shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, during forty days. He did not appear in the splendor of heavenly glory *once* only, dazzling their eyes, bearing down their reason, and confounding their understanding, but in his usual form, conversing, eating, and drinking, and submitting his body to be handled and examined; for

for as a *reasonable well-grounded* FAITH was required of his Apostles, CHRIST furnished them with every means to obtain it.

It is said that, during his forty days continuance on earth, our LORD conversed with his disciples concerning the kingdom of heaven. His conversations are not recorded; but we may suppose, that they consisted of directions to them concerning the discharge of the apostolic office, the design of the Gospel dispensation, and the means and assistances by which they should be enabled to perform a task so apparently above their abilities; and of encouragement to support them under the difficulties and dangers they were shortly after to encounter.

SECTION L.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR BLESSED LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.—HE COMMANDS HIS APOSTLES TO BAPTIZE ALL NATIONS.

*From Luke, Chap. xxiv.—Acts, i.—Matt. xxviii.
Mark, xvi.*

JESUS and his apostles being assembled together, he led them out as far as Bethany,

And commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, LORD, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.

Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Then go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

And when he had spoken these things, he lift up his hands and blessed them.

And it came to pass that while he blessed them, they beheld, and he was parted from them, and was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And he was received into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the CHRIST the SON of GOD, and that believing ye might have life through his name.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At what time the Apostles returned from Galilee to Jerusalem is not related; but it is very probable that they

they remained in Galilee till the usual time of going up to the Holy City, in order to be in readiness for the celebration of the feast of Pentecost; when they might safely repair thither without suspicion, because the law of Moses required every man to appear in the temple at that festival.

Our LORD commanded his Apostles not to depart from Jerusalem to pursue their worldly business, but to wait for the accomplishment of the Divine promise, relating to the descent of the Holy Spirit*; because it was the Divine will, that the visible descent of the Holy Spirit should be made in that Holy City, in which the Divine presence had so frequently been manifested, and because the Gospel, according to the prediction of Isaiah, was to go forth from Jerusalem.

The minds of the Apostles had been already illuminated by the Holy Spirit, communicated to them when our SAVIOUR breathed on them, so that they were enabled to understand the Scriptures; but in a short time they were to be *baptized* with the Holy Ghost, that is, cleansed, purified, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, as the priests of the law were purified by the washing of water.

The promises of GOD, respecting his sending the MESSIAH, were faithfully accomplished; but there were other promises, which our LORD himself had lately repeated, relating to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which John the Baptist had also foretold†; these, our LORD assured his disciples, should likewise be fulfilled in a few days.

The Apostles, judging that our LORD was preparing for some great solemnity, supposed that the kingdom of the MESSIAH would immediately take place, and that

* See Section xxv.

† Section xvi. Vol. V.

they should at this time be invested with the miraculous power which he had promised them ; and being eager to know whether their conjecture was right, they asked our LORD if this was his intention of calling them all together. But he checked their curiosity, by desiring them to be contented with such revelations as Divine wisdom saw fit to make them. What was *proper* and *requisite* for them to learn, he said, would be communicated in its *proper season*. All that was necessary for them to know at that time was, that they should receive power to perform the task required of them by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and be enabled to bear witness to the LORD wheresoever they should be dispersed.

He then solemnly repeated his promise of sending the COMFORTER ; and enforced his command for converting and baptizing persons of all nations who would receive his doctrine, and profess their belief in the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST ; assuring them, that he would never forsake his true disciples, but support and comfort them as long as the world should last, on condition of their fidelity. Then pronouncing an affectionate and solemn benediction, he gently rose from the earth ; and while they beheld him with the strictest observation, a cloud received him out of their sight, and he ascended to heaven, where he sat down at the right hand of GOD the FATHER.

It was very fit and proper that our LORD should *ascend*, as there were yet many ages to come before the end of the world. It was also necessary that he should ascend visibly to confirm the faith of his disciples *.

To heaven CHRIST ascended as our KING, that he might subdue his enemies, and protect his subjects ; and

* See Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies.

as our PRIEST, that he might enter into the presence of GOD the FATHER, to intercede for us. He also went, as he declared, to prepare a place for each of his faithful followers, and in his resurrection to give them a pledge of their own.

There was the utmost propriety in the circumstances attending the ascension. Our LORD went up in the presence of all his Apostles, those whom he had chosen to be witnesses of his life and doctrine. While he was blessing his disciples, by which he supported his character to the last, he did the work of heaven, and left us an example of kindness and benevolence.

The *place* our LORD fixed on for his ascension was the fittest that could be selected. *Mount Olivet* was the scene of his passion; there two of his Apostles had beheld him in agony, and there they now saw him triumphant; from which they were taught, that his passion and his ascension had the same tendency.

From the last verse of this section we understand the nature of the Gospels, and the design of the Apostles in publishing them to the world. They are not given to us as complete narratives of *all* our LORD did while on earth, nor even of all the miracles he wrought in confirmation of his doctrine, but as testimonies of what the Apostles themselves saw and heard, recorded for the purpose of proving that JESUS was the SON of GOD.

SECTION LI.

THE ANGELS' DISCOURSE WITH THE APOSTLES AFTER
THE ASCENSION OF JESUS.

From Acts, Chap. i.

AND whilst they looked stedfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel.

Who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

And the disciples worshipped the LORD, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Phillip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

They all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

And they were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After our LORD was gone quite out of sight, his Apostles continued to look stedfastly up to heaven, hoping, perhaps, that he would return, or that the cloud would be withdrawn, and they should obtain a view of him in his heavenly state: he therefore sent two ministering

tering spirits to restrain their curiosity, and to confirm their faith concerning his second coming : which he had himself frequently intimated to them, but which it is likely they did not at that time recollect, though it was very necessary they should do so, in order to reconcile themselves to the loss of his presence.

When the disciples had heard from the heavenly messengers, that the LORD was actually gone to heaven, they believed his repeated declaration, that he was the SON OF GOD, and as such paid him *adoration*.

In order to understand the phrase of *sitting at the right hand of GOD*, we must recollect that our SAVIOUR constantly referred the glory of his mighty works to GOD THE FATHER. Our LORD was the *only-begotten SON of this glorious Being* : for the GODHEAD, or WORD, which dwelt in him (or constantly remained with him, as our souls do with our bodies) proceeded *immediately and essentially* from the *fountain of Being*, and he never had a *mortal* father. *Sitting at the right hand of GOD*, signified being exalted above all creatures, to be honoured as the next in power and dignity to the FATHER. The following sections will explain this more fully.

When the Apostles found their LORD would return no more to earth till he should descend to call mankind to judgment, they resolved to go back to *Jerusalem*, in obedience to his command. A sabbath-day's journey is generally reckoned by the Jews to be two thousand cubits, which was the distance between the ark and the camp when they marched. This is usually computed to be about a mile.

Struck with the profoundest awe and reverence at the wonderful things they had lately seen and heard, the Apostles resorted to a private apartment, where they could without interruption give way to the pious effusions of
M 6 their

their hearts, which exulted with rapturous delight at their blessed LORD's exaltation, and the hopes of being in due time partakers of his heavenly kingdom. Here they were joined by *Mary* our LORD's *Mother*, whose sorrow was now turned into joy: and here they exchanged congratulations with those pious women who had so courageously followed their beloved Master, and so tenderly bemoaned his death. What a happy change of scene was this! *Private* praises could not sufficiently express their gratitude; therefore they took every opportunity of attending the public service of the temple, that they might in the sacred courts bless the name of GOD, and make supplication for the aid of his HOLY SPIRIT, which their divine Master had repeatedly taught them to expect.

Let the thoughts of our LORD's ascension lead us to pay a willing allegiance to him; let it also animate our devotion, and comfort us in our passage through life, and excite us to use our best endeavours to purify our hearts and exalt our affections, that we may aspire after heavenly joys, and at length follow our blessed Redeemer to the regions of eternal bliss!

The following Psalms, written by King David, appear to be prophetic of our LORD's exaltation, and are excellently calculated to assist the minds of Christians in meditating on this important subject.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PSALMS*.

The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

* Psalm xxiv.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? and who shall stand in His holy place?

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the GOD of his salvation.

This is the generation of them that seek Him, of them that seek thy face, O Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.

** The MESSIAH shall joy in Thy strength, O LORD; and in Thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!*

Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.

For Thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: Thou settest a crown of pure gold on His head.

He asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.

His glory is great in Thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

For Thou hast made him most blessed for ever: Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.

For the MESSIAH trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee.

Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Their fruit shalt Thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

For they intended evil against Thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

Therefore shalt Thou make them turn their back, when Thou shalt make ready Thine arrows upon Thy strings against the face of them.

Be Thou exalted, LORD, in Thine own strength: so will we sing and praise Thy Power.

Though our LORD's Apostles no more beheld him on earth after his *ascension*, some of them were indulged with visions, representing him to their imagination in his glory. His beloved disciple *John* in particular, who wrote a book, which has been transmitted to us, called "*The Revelation of John the Divine.*" It contains a number of prophecies relating to the state of the church in different ages, from the days of the Apostles to the end of the world, which are at present involved in great obscurity; but there are many plainer passages, which may be considered as the *continuation of our LORD's personal history*. These afford great satisfaction in the perusal; we will therefore examine some of them. But it will be proper first to have recourse to the *ancient prophecies*, in order to see how they describe the Divine Being, whom they style the LORD, and what they predicted concerning the *glorification of the SON of MAN*.

SECTION LII.

EXTRACTS FROM THE ANCIENT PROPHECIES.

*From Isaiah, Chap. xliv. xlviii. vi.—Ezek. i.**Dan. x. and vii.*

I. THUS saith the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, JEHOVAH GOD of Hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no GOD.

II. Hearken unto me, O Jacob my servant; and Israel, whom I have called. I am He; I am the first, and I am the last:

Yea, my hand hath founded the earth: and my right hand hath spanned the heavens.

I am the LORD thy GOD, the Holy One of Israel thy SAVIOUR.

III. I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filled the Temple.

Above it stood the Seraphims—and one cried unto another and said, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD of Hosts, the whole earth is full of thy glory.

And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone, and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as of the appearance of a MAN above upon it.

And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire, round about within it; from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

IV. I lift up mine eyes and looked, and behold a
MAN

MAN clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz.

His body also was like beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

V. I beheld till the thrones of the earth were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

A fiery stream issued before him, thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

I saw, and behold one like the SON OF MAN came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there were given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From the former part of these extracts we may understand, that the Divine Being, called the LORD under the *Mosaic dispensation*, was the ONE eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the preserver and deliverer of Israel; yet in several parts of the Old Testament we read, that God is *invisible*, that no man has seen God at any time. The term *invisible* refers to God as the FATHER, who, in respect to his infinite *majesty* and *greatness*, cannot be seen by any *creature*; but we learn from many parts of Scripture that the

DEITY

DEITY made his PRESENCE evident to the senses of men and angels, by a *Person* or *Representative* proceeding immediately from Himself, and of the same *essence* or *nature*, and that this *Person* or *Representative* is distinguished by the titles of the LORD, the LORD GOD, JEHOVAH the GLORY OF THE LORD, the WORD OF THE LORD, the LORD OF HOSTS, &c. and HE was frequently seen by the Patriarchs, and during the Mosaic dispensation, under these characters.

It appears from the Jewish history, that as a punishment for the sins of his chosen people, the LORD (or WORD, as St. John styles him) was hidden from them, only making occasional revelations of the DEITY to particular persons called Prophets; but to them he was revealed in *visions*, as sitting on a glorious throne in heaven, (as the GLORY of the LORD formerly sat between the Cherubims on the ark,) representing the majesty of God, and worshipped by the heavenly host as GOD. They likewise beheld in the same manner the LORD, or ANCIENT OF DAYS, He, *whose goings forth had been of old from everlasting*, receiving to himself the SON OF MAN, or MESSIAH, investing him with *everlasting* and *universal dominion* over all *people, nations, and languages*. From the *New Testament* we learn that at a time appointed by infinite wisdom, the LORD, or DIVINE WORD, took our nature to him, and appeared on earth, as MAN possessing *human faculties*, but displaying at the same time every property which *former revelations* had taught mankind to ascribe to the DEITY. This wonderful Being was called JESUS CHRIST, *the only begotten SON OF GOD*. By his doctrine and miracles CHRIST proved, that the LORD of the people of Israel manifested his presence on earth in *his person*. It is, therefore, the duty of *Christians* to acknowledge CHRIST

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as *their* LORD, to worship the *invisible* God, whom he styled the FATHER, in him, and to form their ideas of the *attributes* of the DEITY from the history of the miracles and doctrine of *him* in whom the GODHEAD dwelt, and to whom alone, of all the human race, he was fully known.

Our SAVIOUR repeatedly declared, that he was united with the infinite eternal God whom he styled his FATHER; and that he should never be separated from him, but continue to all eternity what the sacred writings teach us the LORD or WORD had been from the very beginning, the *executor of the divine Will to all creatures*, and the *visible representative of the invisible DEITY*.

We will now read some parts of the Revelations made to St. John, many years after our SAVIOUR's ascension, which prove that our blessed REDEEMER, according to his *divine* nature, was the *same* LORD who was revealed to the *Prophets*, and that his *human nature* was admitted to a participation of his divine glory.

SECTION LIII.

EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS.

From Chap. i. iv. and v.

I. I JOHN, was in the isle that is called Patmos, I was in the spirit on the LORD's day; and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.—

And I turned to see what voice spake with me; and being turned, I saw—

One like the son of man, clothed with a garment down

down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle.

His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

—And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead: and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last.

I am he that liveth, and was dead: and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.

II. After this I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard, was as it were a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither; and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

And immediately I was in the spirit, and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and on the seats were four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices:—

And

And before the throne was a sea of chrystal : and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him ; and they were full of eyes within ; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, LORD GOD Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

The four and twenty elders fall down and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within, and on the back side, sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof ?

And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

And I wept much ; because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not : behold,

hold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation:

And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

And

And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the first of the foregoing visions we may perceive, that the Being who declared himself to be the first and the last, answered the description of him whom the ancient Prophets saw in their visions on the throne of heaven. We find, that he also declared himself to be the MESSIAH, who died and rose again from the dead; and though his form was so transcendently glorious, this glorious being bore a striking resemblance to the person of JESUS CHRIST, and St. John was convinced that he was in reality the *same*.

We must not suppose that the Apostle saw these things with his corporeal eyes. VISIONS are caused by the miraculous operations of divine power on the imaginations of men, by which extraordinary scenes are displayed in order to represent to their minds in a figurative manner things which really exist, but which human faculties cannot conceive, nor human language describe in any other way.

The instruction intended to be conveyed by the visions we have been considering, compared with those in the foregoing section, is that the person, whom the prophets saw in their visions, was the LORD, or DIVINE WORD; and HE, like the *Son of Man*, our LORD JESUS CHRIST; and that he is now in possession of everlasting and universal dominion at the right hand of God, where he will remain for ever, executing the Divine Will to all creatures, and receiving their adorations.

It is clearly intimated in the vision which has the second place in this section, that our blessed Redeemer is

to be honoured and worshipped in a double capacity as GOD and the MESSIAH. To prove this, it will be necessary to examine what is implied by the symbols of which the vision is composed.

He who sat on the throne was the LORD OF DIVINE WORD *, the brightness of his FATHER'S glory, and the express *image* of his person. The four beasts, symbols of *strength, courage, vigour, firmness, patience, perseverance, intelligence, activity, &c.* represent according to prophetic language, the angelic natures.—The *four and twenty Elders* seem to signify the *ministers or church of God*.—The *sealed book*, the *secret decrees and purposes of God* respecting the *salvation of mankind*. This book is described as *impenetrable*, so that neither *men* nor the highest order of *angels* could unfold it. But *Prophecy* represented by an *Elder* gave hopes, that an excellent person of the family of David, described in a *revelation* made to the patriarch *Jacob* under the symbol of a *Lion*, to represent his invincible strength and fortitude, would conquer this difficulty.—At length this illustrious personage presents himself before the throne, standing in the midst between it and the surrounding multitudes, not indeed like a *Lion* (for that symbol referred to another circumstance of his character), but like a LAMB *which had been slain for sacrifice*, of a very uncommon form, having seven horns and seven eyes, instead of two, as tokens of the wonderful degree of divine knowledge and energy which he possessed. On his advancing to the throne, the book was delivered to him by the glorious person who sat thereon, on which the heavenly host and the *elders, or church of God*, discovered that he, who on earth was called the *Lamb of God*, was appointed to

* Heb. iii. 1.

make known the secret decrees of infinite wisdom and mercy, and that he was worthy to be a partaker of the *worship* paid to Him who sat on the throne; they therefore composed a *new song*, such as had never been sung in heaven nor on earth, in honour of the MESSIAH, calculated not only for the angelic hosts and glorified spirits, but for every individual of the human race on earth, in all future ages of the world.

Though all this was represented in an *imaginary* scene, it conveys a lively and just idea of the Gospel Dispensation, and teaches us how to pay our adorations to CHRIST:

In the first place, we must worship him as the *visible representative* of GOD THE FATHER, and as the *Executor* of the Divine Will to all *created* beings; by whom GOD made the world and all things in it, by whom GOD was in CHRIST, *reconciling* the world to himself, and *sanctifying* the MESSIAH, that he might be *worthy* to offer himself as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world.

We must also honour the LORD as the MESSIAH, because, on account of his perfect obedience to the Divine Will, CHRIST is esteemed by the FATHER as *worthy to be called* HIS SON, and to partake of the adoration paid to the LORD (his WORD) to whom he was essentially united. And He justly demands our utmost gratitude and warmest thanksgivings, because he *offered himself in our stead*, and *has washed us from our sins in his blood*; by which we are sanctified in the sight of GOD THE FATHER, who will accept us as a *nation of priests*, a *holy people*, for the sake of *his merits*, if we will be faithful and obedient, and make his Gospel the rule of our actions.

Therefore with *angels* and *arch-angels*, and all the
company

company of heaven, let us laud and magnify the name of our blessed Redeemer, who is gone up on high, who has led captivity captive! evermore praising him and saying,

We ascribe to thee, O LORD, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Thou art *worthy*, O LAMB OF GOD, to receive divine power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou hast by thy perfect obedience made thyself acceptable to THE FATHER, sanctified us by thy blood, and redeemed us from eternal death.

Glory and power be unto HIM *that sitteth on the throne* of the *infinite, invisible, incomprehensible* GOD, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever *!

I think it must clearly appear to you, that this kind of adoration of the SON is perfectly consistent with the worship of the FATHER, and that the FATHER is *honoured* in the SON.

We will now see how the Apostles proceeded to act after their LORD's ascension.

SECTION LIV.

THE DISCIPLES ELECT ANOTHER APOSTLE IN THE ROOM OF JUDAS ISCARIOT.

From Acts, Chap. i.

AND in those days (after CHRIST was ascended into

* The former part of the 1st chap. of St. John's Gospel, and the 1st chap. of St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, will, if read in this place, throw great light on the Prophecies and Revelations contained in the two foregoing sections, and illustrate the doctrine here attempted to be inculcated.

heaven) Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty),

Men and brethren, This scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spoke before concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took JESUS.

For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem: insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take.

Wherefore of these men who have companied with us all the time that the LORD JESUS went in and out among us,

Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

And they prayed, and said, Thou, LORD, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon

upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles*.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Apostles were originally ordained twelve, with a view, as is supposed, to the twelve tribes of Israel; and our SAVIOUR informed them, that there were twelve thrones designed for them in heaven. As the matter was known to the world, the loss of one might have brought discredit upon the society; and it is likely, that amongst the things pertaining to the *kingdom of God*, on which our LORD discoursed with his disciples before his ascension, he might direct them to fill up the vacancy. Peter therefore assembled a number of persons for the purpose, and thus began the *Christian Church*, of which our LORD prophesied that Peter should *lay the foundation*, CHRIST himself being the *corner-stone*.

In mentioning the perfidy of Judas, Peter remarked, that David had foretold this circumstance; and that it might also be collected from the Psalms, what destruction would fall on so treacherous a person, what ignominy would blot his character, and the evil consequences which the crime of the apostate would occasion to his family †: part of these predictions the Apostles had seen remarkably fulfilled in the tragical end of Judas, and the appropriation of the sum he had so infamously acquired, to a purpose which would perpetuate the remembrance of his crime; for the name of the field that was

* Note, The History of the Acts of the Apostles is attributed to St. Luke the Evangelist: it is supposed to have been written about the 63d year of the Christian æra, and may be considered as a continuation of his Gospel. Many of the first Christian writers bear testimony to its being genuine.

† See Psalm cix.

purchased with the reward of his iniquity, would prevent its ever being forgotten.

By Peter's allusions to these Psalms, we may understand that they were *prophetic*; and though they might be suitable to David as a *type of CHRIST*, it may be inferred that they principally relate to our LORD's history; and that the *curses* they contain were not denounced by the Psalmist on his *personal* enemies, but intended as *predictions* of what *would* befall the enemies of the MESSIAH. The Apostle had had his mind opened to understand the Scriptures, and, like his blessed LORD, he was attentive to the fulfilment of the prophecies; and as it appeared to him, that in this Psalm the HOLY SPIRIT directed those who were the chosen witnesses of the resurrection to elect another into the office of Judas, he prepared to do it immediately; but observed, that it was proper to fix on one who had been a constant attendant on CHRIST from the very beginning of his ministry to the time of his ascension. On this the *whole company* joined in prayer and supplication for divine direction; and they unanimously selected two candidates, resolving to choose one of them *by LOT* (which was the ancient method of appealing to GOD): in consequence of this, Matthias was admitted as an Apostle in the place of Judas.

It is likely that Barsabas and Matthias were judged to be the best acquainted with every circumstance of our LORD's ministry, resurrection, and ascension. We may observe, that Peter affected no superiority, nor assumed any authority over the rest of the Apostles on this occasion, but addressed all present as his brethren and equals.

In this Section we are again called upon to consider the sin of Judas, and to take warning by his miserable end, not to imitate his crimes. Ministers of the Gospel
in

in particular are reminded of the infamy and disgrace which follow a neglect of their duty, and the indulgence of covetous desires ; they are also instructed to remember, that the LORD knoweth the hearts of all men, and that it is particularly incumbent on them to study the Scriptures, and make themselves fully acquainted with the evidences for the truths of Christianity, that they may teach them to others.

We will now read what the *ancient* prophets predicted concerning the *effusion of the HOLY SPIRIT*.

SECTION LV.

EXTRACTS FROM THE ANCIENT PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

*From Isaiah, Chap. xliv.—Ezek. xi. and xxxvi.—
Zech. xii.—Joel, ii.*

I. HEAR now, O Jacob, my servant ; and Israel, whom I have chosen ;

Thus saith JEHOVAH thy maker, and he that formed thee, and will help thee. Fear not, O my servant Jacob ; for I will pour out waters on the thirsty ; and flowing streams on the dry ground : I will pour out my spirit on thy seed ; and my blessings on thine offspring.

II. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you : and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh ; and I will give them an heart of flesh ;

That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations.

Not for your sakes do I do this, saith the LORD GOD, be it known unto you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

III. I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only child, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.

IV. And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

And also upon the servants, and upon the hand-maids, in those days will I pour out my spirit.

And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD cometh.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The first of these extracts is from the book of Isaiah. Though its full import was not understood at the time it was first published to the world, it evidently alluded to a very extraordinary blessing, which was at some future time to be bestowed by GOD on his faithful servants.

The next is part of Ezekiel's prophecy. It foretels
a wonderful

a wonderful change that should be effected in the hearts or dispositions of many of the *House of Israel* by the HOLY SPIRIT, not for their *own merits*, but through the *grace of God*.

The third is from the book of Zechariah. It implied, that the HOLY SPIRIT would bring many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem to a sense of their guilt in contributing to the death of the MESSIAH, and teach them to supplicate for pardon *him* whom they had *pierced*.

The fourth extract is a part of Joel's prophecy. It foretold, that the effusion of the HOLY SPIRIT would not be *partial* but *general*. He particularized some of its *visible* effects, and also foretold, that it would be *poured out* in the last days, or the time of the MESSIAH, and before *the great and terrible day of the Lord*, by which is understood the destruction of Jerusalem.

Let us now take a review of what our LORD *himself* predicted concerning the descent of the HOLY GHOST.

SECTION LVI.

OUR LORD'S ASSERTIONS AND PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE HOLY GHOST.

*From John, Chap. iii. vii. xiv. xv. xvi.—Matt. x.—
Luke, xxiv.—Mark, xvi.—Acts, i.*

I. UNLESS a man be born of water and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

II. When they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak ; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak : for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

The Holy Spirit shall teach you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

III. I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay and resist.

IV. I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, that he may abide with you always, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye shall know him, for he shall dwell with you, and shall be in you.

The Advocate, even the HOLY SPIRIT, whom the Father shall send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.

V. When the Advocate is come whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

VI. It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (or Advocate) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and judgment.

Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

VII. When He the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

VIII. Be-

VIII. Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you ; tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

IX. Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

X. He that believeth in me, the works that I do shall he do ; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father.

XI. And these signs shall follow them that believe ; In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues ;

They shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

All the foregoing predictions we have read in the course of our LORD's history, but they will the more easily be retained in memory from this collective view of them. Let us consider what they principally teach us.

I. We learn, that the *baptism* of the HOLY GHOST is as necessary as that of *water*, in order to qualify any one for admittance into the kingdom of Heaven * ; for it is a part of the MESSIAH's office as *Mediator* to sanctify his disciples, by sending down the HOLY SPIRIT upon them : and he bestows it upon them according to their obedience and necessities ; and accepts none as members of his kingdom, who do not submit to the terms on which he dispenses the HOLY SPIRIT, namely, *repentance* and *water baptism*.

* See our Lord's Discourse, Section xv. Vol. V.

II. We are taught, that the Apostles and first preachers of the Gospel were to be endowed with supernatural knowledge by the HOLY SPIRIT, which is the SPIRIT OF GOD; and that they were required, instead of depending on their own abilities, to expect and rely upon extraordinary illuminations, whenever they were persecuted in the course of their ministry.

III. That these extraordinary illuminations should render them superior to those who had the greatest natural advantages over them.

IV. That the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT would be bestowed by GOD THE FATHER at the intercession of the MESSIAH, and through him. That the HOLY SPIRIT should be manifested to the Apostles, so that they should be able to distinguish his operations from the effects of imagination; and that he should be essentially present in them when they acted as ministers of the Gospel, revealing to them every truth necessary for them to be acquainted with, and enabling them, as appointed witnesses of the ministry and resurrection of CHRIST, to recollect every circumstance requisite to be made known to the world.

V. That the HOLY SPIRIT should be an ADVOCATE to plead the cause of CHRIST, both to the Apostles and the world, and also an additional witness to the truth of his resurrection.

VI. Our LORD declared, that the HOLY SPIRIT would not be poured on the Apostles during his personal abode on earth, because the MESSIAH was to be distinguished from the beginning of his ministry to his ascension, from the rest of mankind, as the HOLY ONE, on whom the SPIRIT OF GOD *rested*; but after his exaltation, he was as *Mediator* to dispense the HOLY SPIRIT to his faithful followers, in order to enable them (in his stead, as he was no longer *personally* present) to reprove the world

for its infidelity in disbelieving the doctrine of redemption, for unrighteousness in respect to immoral acting, and for false judgment in condemning the MESSIAH to death.

VII. We are told that the HOLY SPIRIT would not speak of himself as a separate Deity, but would come as a *guide* to those who were in search of truth; and that all his operations would have a reference to CHRIST and his doctrine; that is to say, he would not *reveal* a NEW system of religion, but *illustrate* that which was revealed by our LORD.

VIII. That the first effusion of the HOLY SPIRIT would be at Jerusalem.

IX. That the HOLY SPIRIT would be poured down upon the Apostles in a few days after our LORD's ascension.

X. and XI. That its effects would be evidently miraculous and various, and more astonishing than even the miracles our LORD performed during the course of his ministry; because our LORD being exalted to the right hand of GOD would shew forth his power, by causing his Gospel to be more extensively propagated than it was expedient to be during his abode on earth. Our LORD called the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT the *promise of his FATHER*. The MESSIAH was the great promise of the *Old Testament*, the HOLY SPIRIT that of the *New*.

Let us now proceed with the history, in order to see how these predictions were accomplished.

SECTION LVII.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

From Acts, Chap. ii.

AND when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place :

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting :

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance,

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans ?

And how hear we every man in his own tongue wherein we were born ?

Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Capadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes,

Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

And

And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this ?

Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words :

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.

And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams :

And on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy :

And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood and fire, and vapour of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the LORD come.

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be saved.

Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.

Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain ;

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains
of

of death ; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the LORD always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved :

Therefore did my heart rejoyce, and my tongue was glad : moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope :

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption :

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up CHRIST to sit on his throne :

He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of CHRIST, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

This JESUS hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which you now see and hear.

For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy foot-stool.

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same JESUS whom ye have crucified, both LORD and CHRIST.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their

their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of JESUS CHRIST for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the LORD our God shall call.

And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the Apostles.

And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart;

Praising God, and having favour with all the people.

And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The *day of Pentecost* (the next great festival to the *Passover*) was kept in remembrance of the LORD's giving the Law from Mount Sinai; it was therefore a peculiarly proper season for the promulgation of the Gospel.

The

The *Feast of Pentecost* was celebrated in the midst of summer, which brought great numbers to Jerusalem.

Peter had collected together the whole community of the disciples who were at Jerusalem, which, as we read in the former section, amounted to an hundred and twenty; these consisted (as we may judge) of the twelve Apostles, the devout women who attended our LORD (amongst whom was his Mother), and a part of the five hundred brethren, to whom he appeared at once. The place in which they were assembled is not certified, but it is likely to have been the large upper room before mentioned; however, it was in *Jerusalem*, as GOD originally ordained, and our blessed LORD foretold.

The *sound from heaven* was doubtless very uncommon and surprising, and raised in the minds of those that heard it an expectation of some great event. It was a proper symbol of the power and energy of the HOLY SPIRIT, and of its incomprehensible nature *. The cloven or divided tongues were symbols of the miraculous gift of speaking various languages, with which the Apostles and those with them were suddenly endued, in order to render them capable of propagating the Gospel in the most distant nations, to which GOD had graciously promised to send it.

It is observable, that as the division of tongues at *Babel* once introduced *confusion*, and was the mean of *casting off* the *Gentiles*, or those who forsook the worship of the true GOD, and keeping of them from the knowledge of him; so now there was a remedy provided by the *gift* of tongues at *Jerusalem*, to bring the *Gentiles* out of darkness into light, and to remove the veil which had been spread over all nations †.

* See our LORD's discourse with Nicodemus in Sect. xxii. Vol. V.

† Doddridge, Vol. III. in the notes.

The report of what had happened was, it seems, soon spread abroad, which naturally brought together a great concourse of people.

By the Jews from every other nation under heaven, we are to understand, persons from every part of the *known world*, where any who were Jews by natural descent, or had become proselytes to the Jewish religion, dwelt. These Jews were called *devout men*, meaning persons of a religious disposition, who feared God, and obeyed his ordinances. They are said to have *dwelt* at *Jerusalem*. It is likely they had fixed their abode in the Holy City, with a view to the speedy accomplishment of Daniel's prophecy *, concerning the *kingdom of heaven*.

Those who mocked were doubtless of the number of unbelieving Jews. It was very absurd to suppose, that new wine in the head would enable men to speak languages they had never been taught.

The *wonderful things* of which the Apostles spake, we may suppose to have been *redemption by CHRIST*, and the *grace of the Gospel*.

The *gift of tongues* intimated, that the Scriptures should be translated, and the public worship performed in every language.

The Apostles bore with patience the slander that was cast on them, for the Jews had called their LORD a *wine-bibber* : no wonder, therefore, they should cast similar reflections on his followers. Peter, however, with great calmness and temper, stood up to clear himself and his brethren from their unjust censures ; and observed it to be very unlikely that *Jews*, as they all were, should be drunken by 9 o'clock in the morning ; as no man of the Jewish religion who had any regard for his reputation,

* See Section xxvii. Vol. V.

would even taste wine on such a solemn festival as Pentecost, till he had attended the public service of the temple.

Peter then taught them to consider the event which caused such astonishment, as the accomplishment of Joel's prophecy, "that God would pour out his SPIRIT upon all flesh." And what but the SPIRIT of ALMIGHTY GOD *Himself* could produce such astonishing effects? Peter intimated to them, that this effusion of the HOLY SPIRIT would be followed by an awful revolution; and admonished them to pay particular attention to the prophet's declaration, that whoever would be saved from destruction, and placed in a state of security, must invoke the name of the LORD; that is to say, profess his faith in the MESSIAH. Peter next gave a short abstract of the life of CHRIST, who, though he appeared amongst them as a *man* of *Nazareth*, was *peculiarly* approved of God, as they themselves must be convinced by his miraculous works, which were recent in the memory of many who were then present.

To account for the *success* of the wicked conspiracy which the Jews had formed against the life of JESUS, Peter observed, that it was ordained of God, to whom all events were *foreknown*, that CHRIST should submit to death; but it was not in the power of his enemies to confine him in the grave, nor indeed *possible* that he should continue long in a state of death; because God had faithfully promised in a prophecy contained in the book of Psalms *, that he would not leave the *soul* of his HOLY ONE in the place of the dead, nor suffer his *body* to see corruption: and nothing can happen contrary to the determinations of God, which are un-

* See Psalm xvi.

changeable. The Apostle then quoted the passage of the Psalm to which he alluded, and observed, that it evidently related to the MESSIAH, as it could not be fully applied to *David*, but was exactly fulfilled in CHRIST; therefore CHRIST was to be regarded henceforth as *the* LORD of whom *David* spake; and it was expressly required of the house of Israel, to receive him both as the *visible representative of God*, and the MESSIAH whom they had by their prophets been taught to expect would come to bring them salvation.

To enforce the belief of what had been now declared, Peter asserted, that he and his brethren had seen JESUS ascend to heaven, and were appointed by him to bear witness of it. To account for the miraculous gift of tongues, Peter informed his hearers, that the MESSIAH having received from GOD THE FATHER a promise, that he should have power to dispense the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, had now shewed it forth in this wonderful way, to prove that the Divine promise was fulfilled.

Our SAVIOUR repeatedly assured his Apostles * that they should on all occasions relating to their ministry be instructed by the HOLY SPIRIT what to say. This promise was remarkably fulfilled at this time; for the most learned and eloquent man in the world could not have chosen better arguments, or conducted his discourse with more propriety than Peter did, who was originally an ignorant illiterate fisherman. The efficacy of this oration on those who heard it, proved its excellency; for it seems to have convinced the *reason* of every one present, that the miracle they beheld was a proof of CHRIST's exaltation—to have excited the utmost awe and reverence of him—and to have awakened

* See Sect. lvi.

their consciences, so that they were sensible of their own sins, and the necessity of *redemption*, which led them to enquire by what means they might obtain remission of their sins. As soon as they knew the terms of salvation, they gladly complied with them. The terms, we find, were *baptism* and *repentance*.

There is reason to conclude, that many *families* were converted to Christianity at this time; for the word *souls* is generally used in the Scriptures when women, children, and servants, are included; so that we may understand not merely three thousand *men*, but so many *persons*.

The example of the first Christians is a pattern for all succeeding ones. They exactly followed their LORD's commands to live like brethren, to break bread, or celebrate the sacrament of the LORD's Supper in remembrance of him, and to be earnest and frequent in prayer and thanksgiving, both in public and private.

They assembled together for pious conversation in companies, according as their language or other circumstances required, excluding from their *intimate* society all who disbelieved the Gospel; were cheerful among themselves, and liberal to all who wanted relief. The blameless simplicity of their lives and conversation, and the cheerfulness with which they discharged the duties of religion, recommended it in the most forcible manner; so that the LORD, through divine grace, added daily to the church numbers of those who *should* be saved; that is to say, those who had humble teachable minds. The LORD so ordered events by the dispositions of Providence, that all those who resided at Jerusalem, had opportunities afforded them of hearing the Gospel preached with such evident marks of Divine inspiration, as none who made a proper use of their reason could resist.

Much

Much useful instruction may be collected from this section. It assures us of the faithfulness of GOD's promises, made known by the prophets and our blessed SAVIOUR, respecting the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT; and instructs us to study the prophecies of the *Old Testament*, and receive the completion of them as full *evidence* of the truth of the Gospel—to believe in our blessed Redeemer, and consider the power and dignity to which he is exalted, and honour him accordingly—to reflect what we have to *do*, as well as to *believe*, in order to be saved from everlasting destruction.

Baptism is usually administred in our *infant years*, and having been once baptized there is no need for us to repeat it; but *repentance* is an *every-day* duty: for the best of men commit sins daily. How comfortable is it to know, that our sins will be remitted, and the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT bestowed on us, if we do not obstinately resist its Divine influence—for the promise was made not for the Apostles and the immediate disciples of CHRIST only, nor yet for the generation of men who were alive when they preached, but for them and their descendants to the end of the world; and for *all* even of the most distant nations, who would obey the gracious call of God through the LORD JESUS CHRIST. But we must be careful to observe, that none have encouragement to hope for an *irresistable call*; our *own will* must co-operate with Divine grace*; for the Apostle admonished his hearers to *save themselves*. The principal means of doing so he had before pointed out; but he further intimated, that it was requisite to avoid the company of wicked people.

* See Sect. xliv. Vol. V. p. 181, for the definition of Divine grace.

SECTION LVIII.

A LAME MAN CURED BY PETER.

From Acts, Chap. iii.

Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple :

Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us.

And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none ; but such as I have, give I thee : in the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth rise up and walk.

And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up : and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

And he leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking, and praising God.

And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple : and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

And as the lame man which was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

And

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this ? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk ?

The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers hath glorified his Son JESUS ; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

But ye denied the Holy One, and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you ;

And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead ; whereof we are witnesses :

And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know ; yea, the faith which is by him, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that CHRIST should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD ;

And he shall send JESUS CHRIST, which before was preached unto you : Whom the heaven must receive, until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the LORD your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

And it shall come to pass, that every soul which will

not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

Ye are children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

Unto you first, God having raised up his Son JESUS, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is not certain at what time the circumstance mentioned in the beginning of this section happened; but it is supposed to have been during the feast of Pentecost, or shortly after. Some miraculous works had been before performed by the hands of the Apostles, but this miracle of curing the lame man was the most public one, and therefore was particularly mentioned.

When Peter beheld this poor cripple, he felt a charitable desire to relieve him, and immediately knew, by a Divine impulse on his mind, that he should be the instrument of conveying to him a more valuable blessing than riches could purchase; and that the NAME of the LORD JESUS was to be glorified in his cure. No sooner had he pronounced this Sacred Name, than the miracle was effected; for the man believed as well as Peter, and it was unto them *according to their faith*. Thus was Isaiah's prediction * *literally* fulfilled; for the *cripple*, recovered from his lameness, in an ecstasy of joy,

* See Sect. xxix. Vol. V.

leaped like a hart; and the people who beheld him were convinced there was no deception in the case, for the man was known to them as a real cripple. From Peter's address to the people we learn, that this miracle was intended to enforce the belief of his assertions, that JESUS was glorified—that he was the SON OF GOD—the true MESSIAH—the Prince of Life—and the great Prophet. Peter disclaimed all merit in the case. Hence we learn, that the Apostles, though (as we lately read) *filled with the HOLY GHOST*, were *inferior* to CHRIST; for the SPIRIT that *rested* on him was derived immediately from the FATHER, to them it was communicated by the SON: in him it was *inherent*, in them *occasioned*. HE shewed forth the power of GOD, they shewed forth the power of CHRIST.

Having convinced those who heard him, that the Jews had actually crucified the MESSIAH, and that GOD had raised him again, the Apostles, to keep the people from despair, intimated, that even those who were concerned in so atrocious an act were not absolutely unpardonable, as it was possible they had been guilty through *ignorance*. This indeed did not entirely exculpate them, for it was in those who had such means of knowing the truth a great crime to be ignorant; but still it was some mitigation, as they would have been much more guilty had they been fully convinced of the dignity of our LORD's character before they crucified him; and in such a case they could not have hoped for pardon, but now they had encouragement to do so. Peter therefore earnestly exhorted them to repent, that they might have remission of sins, and escape destruction.

With these powerful arguments did Peter address himself to the Jews in the temple, having received com-

mandment to preach the Gospel to them before he attempted to propagate it amongst the Gentiles ; that the memory of *faithful* Abraham, with whom God made the everlasting Covenant, might be honoured, by giving a preference to his faithful descendants.

From this discourse of Peter, we may infer the great advantages of being a Christian, and the absolute necessity of repentance. We also learn, that there will be a future state of retribution, when our LORD JESUS CHRIST will appear again. Then the sins of those who have been faithful will be blotted out, and everlasting refreshment and comfort bestowed on them for his sake.

Christians as well as Jews have much to repent of ; even our sins of *ignorance* have a great degree of guilt ; for while the sacred Scriptures are open to our examination, we may know the whole of our duty, and *what* our SAVIOUR is. May all who have ever undervalued our LORD, as the Jewish rulers did, by regarding him merely as a MAN, or neglected to gain information concerning him or his doctrine, *repent* without delay, and apply themselves with diligence to the study of his precepts and example ! And let us all, from comparing the prophecies of the *Old Testament* with their completions in the *New*, learn “ to adore the wisdom of GOD’s providence, and the fidelity of his *grace*, which overruled the folly and wickedness of men, to subserve his own holy purposes, and to accomplish the promises long before made, by sending the MESSIAH to bring us salvation.”

By preaching repentance and remission of sins, Peter partly fulfilled our LORD’s words, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, beginning

ginning at Jerusalem *. Also the following prediction of the prophet Micah †.

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountain, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

SECTION LIX.

PETER AND JOHN SEIZED AND EXAMINED BY THE
SANHEDRIM.

From Acts, Chap. iv.

AND as they spake unto the people, the priests and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them;

Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day; for it was now even-tide.

Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers and elders, and scribes,

And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John,

* See Sect. lvi.

† Micah, Chap. iv.

and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name have ye done this ?

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole ;

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

This is the stone which is set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled, and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with JESUS.

And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

Saying, what shall we do to these men ? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

But, that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of JESUS.

But

But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God, with one accord, and said, LORD, thou art God which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD, and against his CHRIST.

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together;

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

And now, LORD, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with boldness they may speak thy word,

By stretching forth thy hand to heal: and that signs

and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child JESUS.

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul; neither said any of them, that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the LORD JESUS: and great grace was upon them all.

Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

And laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The captain of the temple was the officer who commanded the Levites then in waiting. The Sadducees, as has been before observed, were a sect of the Jews who disbelieved the resurrection of the dead. The former acted, as we may suppose, by command of the Priests, who were greatly enraged that Peter should presume to teach them in the *name* of JESUS, whom they had so lately condemned to death; and the latter were highly exasperated at the Apostles' doctrine, because it had a direct tendency to overthrow their principles.

Peter and John went up to the temple about three o'clock in the afternoon. As the text informs us it was late

late in the evening when they were seized, we may infer that they had spent some hours in preaching, and that the discourse related in the last section is only a *part* of what was delivered at that time; however, we may be sure every circumstance of it, *necessary* to be known, has been transmitted to us.

The severity exercised towards the Apostles neither intimidated them, nor prevented the efficacy of their doctrine, for many believers were added to the Christian church: so that the number of *men* only who resolved to adhere to it amounted to five thousand.

On the next day (we find) a solemn council was assembled. The Scribes, learned in the *Law of Moses*, who attended the council, came with a view of disputing with the Apostles, in hopes to confute them. Before this august assembly were Peter and John brought, and placed like criminals at the bar of justice, agreeably to our LORD's prediction, that his disciples should be delivered up to the council for his sake*.

The Apostles having received directions from their LORD, during his abode on earth, to yield their minds on such occasions entirely to the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, and finding themselves filled with a divine energy, stood before this awful tribunal with the utmost composure; and when questioned by the Sanhedrim concerning the power by which they had made the lame man to walk, boldly and solemnly averred, that the cripple received the use of his limbs through the name of JESUS CHRIST of *Nazareth*; that very JESUS, whom the council had lately condemned to be crucified as a criminal, but whose doctrine GOD had *justified* by raising him from the dead; and had proved him to be

* Sect. lvii.

that illustrious person whom the royal Psalmist describes in a prophetic psalm, as *the corner stone* of a *noble edifice*; which stone, however inconsiderable it might at first appear, was the origin of the whole building: so in like manner the salvation of all mankind was to be found upon CHRIST, as GOD had appointed *him* for a *Saviour*, and no other.

Our LORD promised his disciples, that he would give them a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist. This was remarkably fulfilled on this occasion; for the whole council, with the assistance of the Scribes, could not confute them.

It was evident, that Peter had neither practised medical skill, nor magic arts, to work this cure; and he must be the best able to account for the power by which the miracle was wrought. Neither could it be supposed, that unlearned and ignorant men would have been able to carry on a deception, or courageous enough to justify themselves in such an assembly, had they uttered a falsehood.

When Peter and John returned to their *Fellow-Christians*, every one present listened with joy to their account of what had passed; and, instructed by the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT to understand the prophecies, immediately perceived how exactly this event agreed with *David's* prediction in the second psalm*, which they now understood related to the MESSIAH; they, therefore, unanimously offered up their praises to our heavenly FATHER, acknowledging that JESUS was truly the SON OF GOD, the HOLY ONE, against whom Pontius Pilate, Herod, and the Jewish rulers, had asso-

* See Psalm ii.

ciated; but could not have prevailed against him, had not God in his eternal councils decreed that he should *willingly* submit to their malice. They then offered up their united prayers, that God would endue all those who were required to bear testimony to the *Gospel* with the same fortitude Peter and John possessed; and that the *name of Jesus* might be equally efficacious on all occasions where miracles were necessary. This prayer was graciously received, and some visible token of its acceptance granted, perhaps similar to that on the day of Pentecost; and the whole assembly, through the *DIVINE ENERGY*, found themselves animated with supernatural courage, which they exercised in bearing public testimony to the truths of Christianity. The Apostles in particular illustrated the doctrine founded upon the resurrection, and the *LORD* gave to their hearers grace to understand and apply it. But the disciples did not so entirely give themselves up to spiritual exercises, as totally to neglect worldly concerns—though they were *Christians*, they were *men*, and stood in need of food and raiment. *Estates* indeed they had no use for, and *houses* were incumbrances to those who were from henceforth to have no settled places of abode; it was therefore resolved, that each member of the community possessed of either should sell them, in order to make a common purse for the occasional supply of each man's necessities. By this means, those who had formerly subsisted by their labour were relieved from the fear of present want, and at liberty to leave their avocations without distressing their families; and those who had before been *cumbered* with their possessions, were delivered from the temptations of wealth, and had leisure to attend to *the one thing needful*. Their laying their possessions at the Apostles'

feet, was in token of their holy contempt of the *world*; and the uses to which it was appropriated evinced that the Apostles had no private views of enriching themselves.

From this section we learn never to be ashamed of our Christian profession; and to think it the safest and wisest way, on all occasions, to obey God rather than MAN—to banish *selfishness*, and open our hearts to sentiments of benevolence, generosity, and charity. Not that Christians are *now* required to sell their possessions, and have all things in common—thanks to the merciful providence of God, the times do not render it necessary: neither did *all* Christians in the first age do so; for in the epistles which were written by the Apostles, they speak of *rich* and *poor*, in the different characters they addressed; and we learn from them to consider ourselves as the stewards of God, and as such to employ our portion of worldly goods so as best to promote his honour, our own eternal happiness, and the welfare of our fellow-creatures.

SECTION LX.

THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

From Acts, Chap. v.

AND Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation), a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus.

Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

And

And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

Whilst it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

And Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

And Peter said unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said, Yea, for so much.

Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost; and the young men came in, and found her dead, and carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Josep, though a Levite, so far from being prejudiced against Christianity, gladly devoted himself to its service,

vice. He was by birth a Cyprian, and probably had an estate in the island of Cyprus, which he could alienate without any transgression of the law—his paternal inheritance, as a Levite, he could not have sold. Joses was named Barnabas, which in the Syriac language signifies a *Son of consolation*, on account (as is supposed) of his extraordinary abilities for comforting weak minds.

Ananias and Sapphira were persons of a very different character from Joses. Instead of being actuated, like him, by religious zeal, they had a view to their future *worldly* advantage; but the HOLY SPIRIT prevented the success of their intended fraud in a most striking manner.

It were needless to animadvert upon every circumstance of the story, for the guilt of these two hypocritical persons must appear to every one in its proper light; but we should particularly observe, that Peter told them, “lying to one who had proved himself to be under divine influence, was lying to the HOLY GHOST, and lying to the HOLY GHOST was lying to GOD:” from whence we may infer, that the HOLY GHOST is to be considered as GOD manifested through CHRIST in the Apostles. We may also understand, that though Peter imputed the sin of Ananias (and of course that of Sapphira) to the suggestions of Satan, he intimated, that they might have resisted them.

Let the fate of this deceitful pair make a lasting impression on our minds. Let it teach us to consider how hateful falsehood is, and make us careful to avoid all kinds of dissimulation. Let us live perpetually on our guard against the suggestions of Satan, and never suffer him to fill our hearts, but let us resist the first temptations to sin, and pray for divine grace to strengthen us.

SECTION

SECTION LXI.

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH INCREASES. THE APOSTLES
IMPRISONED AND EXAMINED BY THE SANHEDRIM.

From Acts, Chap. v.

AND by the hands of the Apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

And believers were the more added to the LORD, multitudes both of men and women;)

Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation.

And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

But the angel of the LORD by night opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said,

Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the

the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: (for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned:)

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

Saying, Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered, and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree?

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins:

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him,

When

When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space ;

And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody ; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him : he also perished ; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought :

But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest happily ye be found to fight against God.

And to him they agreed : and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After the death of Ananias and Sapphira, hypocrites were intimidated, and sincere believers encouraged.

We find that the people in general entertained the highest veneration for the Apostles. Peter beheld those who came to be cured by him with a compassionate wish to relieve them, and in full assurance that the power of CHRIST was sufficient to do it, and that the LORD would honour his Ministers as he had promised to do, he pronounced with FAITH *His blessed Name*, which the afflicted heard with transport and confidence, and soon found the benefit of trusting to its efficacy; for whether their distempers were of the body or mind, every one was perfectly restored to health and tranquillity. Thus did the LORD, in remembrance of his promise, put honour upon his Apostles, by performing through them more wonderful works than he himself did, during his abode on earth: for it was certainly a *greater*, or at least a more *striking* proof of Divine power *inherent in him*, that he could employ so many people as instruments of his will, than appeared from the performance of miracles by his own hand.

When the Apostles were thrown into prison, it soon appeared that the malice and rage of the most powerful man is impotent against those whom God supports; and when examined and threatened by the chief Priests, they continued firm to their principles; and, far from being terrified by the unjust and cruel usage they had met with, or the threatenings of their adversaries, they *rejoiced greatly*, that they were so honoured in the course of Divine providence, as to be *accounted worthy to suffer for CHRIST*, and to be *exposed to infamy for the sake of his*
holy

holy name; rightly judging, that a punishment of this kind was likely in the end to become a glory to them when borne for the sake of him who, though so divinely great and so perfectly happy, had submitted not only to stripes, but to death for them.

How wonderful are the ways of Providence? Who would have expected, that amongst the members of the Sanhedrim should be found a *guardian* and *pleader* for the Apostles? What an encouragement is this to Christians, to bear persecution for the sake of CHRIST, if it falls to their lot; and much more to submit to the common misfortunes and inconveniences which attend a religious course of life, with confidence in Divine protection!

SECTION LXII.

SEVEN DEACONS APPOINTED TO ASSIST THE APOSTLES
IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PUBLIC CHARITY.
THE TRIAL AND MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

From Acts, Chap. vi. vii.

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

And

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch;

Whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Then they suborned men, and said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.

And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council.

And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law.

For we have heard him say, That this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

And all that sat in the council looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Then

Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

And he said, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. [Then Stephen opened to them the scriptures, shewing the backslidings of the people of God, from the days of Abraham to the coming of CHRIST, and their idolatries, and how they disobeyed Moses, persecuted the prophets, and betrayed and crucified the MESSIAH.]

And Stephen said, Though your fathers received the law by the disposition of angels, ye have not kept it.

Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth;

But he being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord.

And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying LORD JESUS, receive my spirit.

And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, LORD, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

And Saul was consenting unto his death.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Those called Grecians in the beginning of this section

are

are supposed to have been certain converts to the Gospel, who being foreign Jews, and coming from the western country, used the Greek language in their synagogues and conversation; these murmured against the *Hebrews*, who were natives of Judea, and used the Hebrew or Syriac tongue, because, as they were strangers at Jerusalem, and had not so much interest as the natives, their necessitous widows were in some degree neglected in the daily administration of the charities that were distributed to the poor members of the church. The measure proposed by the Apostles of appointing Deacons to assist in the distribution of the money collected, was well calculated to prevent future disputes. **Nicolas**, one of the seven, was not a Jew born, but a proselyte of Antioch, whom they were the more willing to fix in this office; as his peculiar relation to the Grecians would make him particularly careful to remedy any neglect of them which might inadvertently have prevailed. Upon these seven men the Apostles, after having prayed that a divine blessing might attend all their ministrations and care, laid their hands, as a sign that the HOLY SPIRIT would assist their endeavours; and thus consecrated them to their office.

It is very surprising to read that many of the priests, notwithstanding all those prejudices which they had imbibed against Christianity, from the scorn with which the High Priest and rulers treated it, and the loss of the temporal advantages they might be obliged to resign on account of it, became obedient unto the faith of CHRIST. And Stephen having for some time discharged the duty of a deacon with great fidelity, was raised to superior honours.

The men who opposed this pious decree belonged to a particular synagogue, called that of the Libertines, which consisted of the children of men who had been carried
into

into captivity, and afterwards set at liberty. The surprising radiancy of Stephen's countenance was a *sign* from the Almighty, that he approved the benignity and sweetness of his disposition, in which he resembled the celestial spirits. When called upon to make his defence, he began a large discourse, in which, in the softest and most inoffensive manner, he solemnly declared his firm persuasion of the divine authority of that law, which he was accused of blaspheming; and proved to them, from their own Scriptures, that God's gracious regard to his people was not limited within the boundaries of that land, nor appropriated to those only who were subject to the Mosaic ritual; at the same time reminding them of some instances in which they had ungratefully rejected those whom God had appointed for their deliverers, that they might be cautioned against repeating the fault in this instance to their final ruin.—Stephen's whole discourse is worthy of particular consideration, but it would break in too much on the thread of the history to examine it at present. It is sufficient for our purpose to observe, that he concluded with reproaching the Jews for having despised so many advantages, and given such amazing proofs of obstinacy and hardness of heart; telling them, that as they did not keep up to the law of Moses, that was given them with such awful pomp on Mount Sinai, when the LORD shined forth with ten thousands of his holy attendants*; it was the less to be wondered at, that they now rejected the milder and more gracious dispensation of the Gospel, and thus added sin to sin.

Stephen, favoured with a glorious vision of his divine LORD, met his fate not only with resignation but joy; and having, in imitation of his divine Master, prayed

* Deut. xxxiii. 2.

For his enemies, he calmly resigned his soul into his SAVIOUR's hands, and died with as much composure as if he was only falling into a gentle sleep.

Saul, the young man who took charge of the witnesses' clothes whilst they threw the first stones, as the law required, was afterwards converted.

By Stephen's address to the Jewish rulers we learn from what motives persecution usually arises. It begins in mistake, is carried on by pride, and ends in cruelty.

From the mildness with which Stephen suffered martyrdom, and the charity he shewed to his enemies, we are instructed in what manner to endure persecution, should it ever fall to our lot. We also understand, that there are no sufferings so great, but GOD can enable his faithful servants to bear them with fortitude and composure; and that in very extraordinary trials, extraordinary comfort and support will be granted.

From his calling on the LORD JESUS *to receive his spirit*, we are assured, that it is *proper* to pray to CHRIST; for Stephen did so, in consequence of seeing him as he appeared to Ezekiel and Daniel in prophetic visions, and as the Evangelist John afterwards beheld him, sitting on the throne of heaven as the LORD, the only *Mediator* between GOD and *Man*; through whom *alone* we have access to the FATHER. When CHRIST yielded *his SPIRIT*, it was into the hands of the FATHER; but we must commit ours into the hands of the SON, for he hath purchased them with his own blood, and by him they will be preserved till the resurrection of the body *.

* As the chapters in the Acts contain such a number of verses, that they alone would occupy a considerable part of a volume, I am under the necessity of relating the *substance* of some of them in the Annotations, instead of giving them at length. In doing this I shall borrow from Dr. Doddridge's Family Expositor.

SECTION

SECTION LXIII.

STEPHEN'S BURIAL—A PERSECUTION IN THE
CHURCH—THE DISCIPLES DISPERSED.

From Acts, Chap. viii.

Stephen was buried with great solemnity, and public lamentations made for the loss of so useful a member of the church.

On the very day that he suffered martyrdom, a great persecution began against the Christians in Jerusalem, which continued to rage so furiously, that at length all the disciples, excepting the Apostles, retired from that city, and dispersed themselves in different places, through the regions of Judea and Samaria; but Peter and his brethren were determined to continue at Jerusalem, however dangerous it might prove. It is likely the others departed with their consent and approbation, and according to the dictates of the HOLY SPIRIT, and not through cowardice.

Amongst the persecutors, none more distinguished himself than *Saul*. He pursued the Christians like a furious beast of prey, not only breaking in upon public assemblies, but entering into houses, and dragging from them, without any respect to age or sex, men and women, whom he committed to prison for no pretended crime, but that of having embraced the Gospel. Nevertheless, GOD ruled over all this cruelty and rage; for those who were dispersed abroad, went about preaching the *Word* wherever they came, and in many places they were remarkably successful, to which the consi-
deration

deration of their being persecuted for righteousness sake might in some measure contribute.

Philip the deacon, the associate of *Stephen*, knowing that all distinction between the *Samaritans* and *Jews* was now removed, went to the city of *Samaria*, and freely preached *CHRIST* to them, and declared him to be the promised *MESSIAH*. Wonderful works through the name of *JESUS* were wrought by his hand.—Evil spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of those that were possessed with them, and many paralytic and lame people were cured. These benevolent miracles, and the heavenly doctrines taught by *Philip*, caused great joy in the city; but there was a certain man in *Samaria* named *Simon*, who had formerly, under a pretence of being possessed of supernatural powers, practised magical arts, which produced such astonishing effects, that numbers of people of all ranks and degrees had been deceived into an opinion that he was the *MESSIAH*. But when *Philip* preached the things concerning the kingdom of *GOD* and the name of *JESUS CHRIST*, both men and women were baptized, and *Simon* himself believed the truths which *Philip* taught, and professed his faith; in token of which he was, like the rest, baptized, and kept always near to *Philip*, observing with astonishment the powerful miracles that were wrought by his hand.

When the *Apostles* who were at *Jerusalem* heard that *Samaria* had received the Word of *GOD*, they were desirous that these new converts should be farther settled in their Christian profession, by those spiritual gifts which no inferior teacher or officer in the church could bestow; they accordingly sent *Peter* and *John*, who, though once so strongly prejudiced against the *Samaritans*, now cheerfully undertook the province; and going to that city prayed for the people, that they might receive

receive the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, and so be put upon an *equality* with the *Jews*, and distinguished by God as belonging to his people; for though the supernatural influences of the SPIRIT were displayed in the miracles wrought by PHILIP, it had not yet fallen upon any of the Samaritans, only they had been baptized with water. But after the Apostles had prayed and laid their hands on the new converts, they received the HOLY SPIRIT, and spoke with tongues, and performed many wonderful works.

When Simon, the Magician saw that the extraordinary operations of the *Holy Spirit* followed the Apostles' *laying-on of hands*, he imagined that if he could do the like, it might turn considerably to his honour and advantage; he therefore offered the Apostles a considerable sum of money to communicate the same power to him. But Peter said unto him, *Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.*

Simon, alarmed by this solemn admonition, entreated the Apostles to supplicate for him, that he might escape the dreadful consequences of his sin, and declared his belief in the Gospel.

Thus did these two Apostles, Peter and John, execute their commission; and when they had borne testimony to the resurrection of the LORD, and made known the terms of salvation, they returned to Jerusalem, stopping in their way to preach in the towns and villages of Samaria.

SECTION LXIV.

PHILIP BAPTIZETH AN ETHIOPIAN NOBLEMAN.

From Acts, Chap. viii.

AND the angel of the LORD spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is in the desert.

And he arose and went : and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

Was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet.

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest ?

And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me ? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter ; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth.

In his humiliation his judgment was taken away ; and who shall declare his generation ? for his life is taken from the earth.

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speakest the prophet this ; of himself, or of some other man ?

Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him JESUS.

And

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that JESUS CHRIST is the SON OF GOD.

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

And when they were come out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to to Cesarea.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Candace is supposed to have been one of the successors of the queen of Sheba, who paid a visit to Solomon. The nobleman was a person of great distinction, and by some means, with which we are not acquainted, had been made a convert to the Jewish religion. He was at this time returning from Jerusalem, where he had been to celebrate one of the great festivals. Having his mind strongly impressed with religious sentiments, he, to assist his meditations, studied the Scriptures on his journey, and read them aloud, either to fix his own attention more strongly, or that his charioteer might also hear him.

It gives one a very high idea of the Gospel to read that the ministers of it received such immediate directions from heaven. And the design for which the angel was sent to Philip proves, that God is not partial to any nation or people; but whoever is desirous of understanding the Scriptures is, by some means or other, furnished

with an opportunity of learning as much of them as, in his particular circumstances, is necessary for his eternal salvation.

We are told that Philip and the Ethiopian *went down into the water together*. In those hot countries bathing was very frequent; therefore it is not to be wondered at, that those who were baptized should be *immersed* in water; but the sacrament is equally efficacious when *sprinkling* only is practised; as it is the *Grace of God* through CHRIST, and not the *Water itself*, that washes away sin: therefore, provided we obey the command of our LORD in being baptized, the *quantity* of water used for the purpose can surely make no difference in respect to its *efficacy*.

The Ethiopian was not the only person converted by means of the 53d chap. of Isaiah. It had the same happy effect on a nobleman of our own nation, Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, a person of great wit and immorality. The fact is thus related by Bishop Burnet.

“ He said (to Bishop Burnet) Mr. Parsons, in order to
 “ his conviction, read to him the 53d chapter of the
 “ prophecy of Isaiah, and compared that with the his-
 “ tory of our SAVIOUR’s passion, that he might there see
 “ a prophecy concerning it wrote many ages before it
 “ was fulfilled; which the Jews that blasphemed JESUS
 “ CHRIST still kept in their hands, as a book divinely
 “ inspired. He said to me, that as he read he felt an
 “ inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his
 “ mind and convince him, that he could resist it no
 “ longer; for the words had an authority which did
 “ shoot like rays or beams into his mind, so that he was
 “ not only convinced by the reasonings he had about it,
 “ which satisfied his undersanding, but by a power
 “ which did so effectually restrain him, that he did ever
 “ after

“ after as firmly believe in his SAVIOUR, as if he had
 “ seen him in the clouds. He had made it be so often
 “ read to him, that he had got it by heart, and went
 “ through a great part of it in discourse with me with a
 “ sort of heavenly pleasure, giving me his reflections
 “ upon it. Some few I remember; *Who hath believed*
 “ *our report?* Here, he said, was foretold the opposition
 “ the Gospel was to meet with from such wretches as
 “ he was. *He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we*
 “ *shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire*
 “ *him.* On this he said, the meanness of our LORD’S
 “ appearance and person has made vain and foolish peo-
 “ ple disparage him, because he came not in such a
 “ fool’s coat as they delight in. What he said on the
 “ other parts I do not, says the Bishop, remember.”

The prophecy here alluded to is now made plain, by
 comparing events with the prediction. How inexplic-
 cable must it have been, before the completion of it by
 our LORD JESUS! From this circumstance, we have
 reason to conclude, that such passages of Scripture, as
 are still dark and obscure, will, in the course of provi-
 dence, be cleared in like manner *. In the mean time
 let us study them with attention, and endeavour to un-
 derstand them, not doubting but God will make our
 study successful, as far as is expedient for us.

From the two instances we have been comparing,
 we may see the superior advantages those who live in a
Christian country enjoy. Lord Rochester was converted
 without a miracle, for he could easily find a minister of
 the Gospel to explain the prophecy; nay, the Gospel it-
 self would have taught him its import: but the Ethio-
 pian nobleman knew not whom to apply to for instruc-

* See Dr. Gregory Sharp on Prophecy, p. 235.

tion; and, had he consulted with a *Jewish* teacher, he would only have been led farther astray.

SECTION LXV.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL.

From Acts, Chap. ix.

AND Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the LORD, went unto the high priest,

And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven.

And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the LORD said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And he trembling and astonished said, LORD, what wilt thou have me to do? And the LORD said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias,

Ananias, and to him said the LORD in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, LORD.

And the LORD said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus : for behold he prayeth,

And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

Then Ananias answered, LORD, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem.

And here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name.

But the LORD said unto him, Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house ; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the LORD (even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest) hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the HOLY GHOST.

And he said, The GOD of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou ? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the LORD.

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales : and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

And straightway he preached CHRIST in the synagogues, that he is the SON of GOD.

But all that heard him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very CHRIST.

And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

But their laying await was known of Saul: and they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he essayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the Apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the LORD in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of JESUS.

And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

And he spake boldly in the name of the LORD JESUS, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.

Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cesarea, and sent him to Tarsus.

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee,

Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the LORD, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What an amazing instance of the power of Divine grace in our blessed Redeemer is here recorded!

We read in a former section, that Saul was one of the greatest persecutors of the Christians. Not satisfied with the severities he exercised over them in Jerusalem, he determined to obtain the sanction of the High Priest and Council, that he might pursue them from city to city, and entirely extirpate them if possible. Having procured from the Sanhedrim letters addressed to the rulers of the Jewish synagogues at Damascus, he set out on his journey. Blinded by prejudice, and hurried on by misguided zeal, he raged like a furious lion, resolving to ravage the sheep, and destroy the tender lambs of CHRIST's flock wherever he came; but the great Shepherd himself interposed to rescue them, and by *restraining the remainder of his wrath* shewed, that no man could wrest them out of his hands.

Saul was the professed enemy of CHRIST; but the LORD, to whom all hearts are open, saw, that it was only for want of *knowing* him that he was so; and that he acted upon a principle of regard to the honour of God in defending the Mosaic Law, and * verily thought that he ought to oppose the Gospel; so that when his zeal was diverted into another channel, he would be a useful member of the Christian church. CHRIST, therefore, chose him for an Apostle to the Gentiles; and that he might be able to bear witness of his resurrection, vouch-

* See Acts, xxvi. 9.

safed to convince him, that he was actually in a state of glory, as his disciples declared him to be.

When Saul heard and saw, that he whom he had so often affronted and despised was such a great and powerful person, and that instead of destroying him he condescended thus kindly and compassionately to expostulate with him, his mind was almost overborne with an unutterable mixture of contending passions; so that trembling at the thoughts of what he had done, and amazed at the glorious appearance of JESUS, he humbly resigned himself to the disposal of the LORD; who informed him of the purpose for which he had called him off from his bloody design, and the work he had appointed him to do; but did not compel him by an irresistible impulse to obey. On the contrary, we have reason to think, that before Saul was required to be baptized, the Gospel scheme was fully made known to him, and his mind opened to understand the Scriptures, and he had leisure afforded him to meditate on the subject without interruption from outward objects; and that for the three days he continued blind he gave himself up to spiritual exercises, fasting, and praying for remission of sins. When Ananias arrived, Saul received from him full confirmation, that his own vision was not a delusion of the imagination; and having made a rational and deliberate choice of the religion of CHRIST in preference to the Jewish law, he was solemnly initiated into the Christian church by baptism; soon after which he received the HOLY GHOST, not by imposition of hands from another Apostle, but as an immediate gift from our LORD himself, who taught him by *Divine inspiration* what was necessary for him to know concerning Him and his doctrine, and thus put him upon an equality with the other Apostles.

We

We see then, that it was on a very extraordinary occasion, and for a very extraordinary purpose, that Saul was *called* to the Gospel in this *miraculous* way, therefore it cannot authorise *ordinary* Christians to expect their own reformation to be effected by a *sudden impulse of Divine grace*, changing the very *nature* of the soul from *extreme wickedness* to *holiness*. It is true, that our LORD *knoweth his sheep*; that is, all who *will* submit to his Gospel, and these he will undoubtedly *call*; that is, furnish them with the means of salvation. But in a Christian country like this, where the Scriptures are publicly read in our churches, where Bibles are in every house, where every neighbourhood has ministers to explain the Gospel, and (it is to be hoped) persons to set an example of the practice of its precepts, where religion is frequently the subject of conversation, and where books of piety abound, it is every one's own fault if he is not a *believer*. Let us then guard our minds against *enthusiasm*, as it has a tendency to make us undervalue *moral actions*, the performance of which is absolutely necessary to complete the character of a real Christian. Without *Divine grace* we certainly can have no salvation; but then we must not expect it to *pour down* upon us like a *torrent*. If we avail ourselves of the means we are furnished with to obtain this inestimable blessing, it will descend into our hearts *insensibly* like drops of rain into the thirsty earth, exciting us to what is right, and deterring us from what is sinful, by informing our *reason*; but *our own will* must co-operate with it to render it effectual. This was evidently the case of Saul, as appears in the course of this history.

It must have been surprising to the Jews as well as to the Apostles, to hear Saul preach the Gospel, as it was known that he went to Damascus with a very different design.

When he departed from Damascus, he did not go back to Jerusalem to join the other Apostles, but made an excursion into Arabia, because he was particularly commissioned to preach to the Gentiles.

No wonder, after his former conduct, that the Apostles should be at first afraid of trusting Saul; when they were convinced of the reality of his conversion, they were ready to receive him into their society.

The persecutions which had been so furiously carried on, we find gradually abated, from various causes, after the conversion of Saul, and Christian churches (or societies) were established throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and the members of them led lives of exemplary piety; they enjoyed the consolation of the *Holy Spirit*, and were considerably multiplied by the accession of new converts. During this peaceful interval many remarkable events happened.

SECTION LXVI.

PETER HEALETH ENEAS OF THE PALSY, AND RESTORETH TABITHA TO LIFE.

From Acts, Chap. ix.

AND it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

And Peter said unto him, Eneas, JESUS CHRIST maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

And

And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the LORD.

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas ; this woman was full of good works, and alms-deeds which she did.

And it came to pass in those days that she was sick, and died : whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Petter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber : and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made whilst she was with them.

But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed ; and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes ; and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up ; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

And it was known throughout all Joppa ; and many believed on the LORD.

And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Lydda was a considerable town near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, and Joppa was a sea-port near to it.

It must have afforded the benevolent Apostle Peter
great

great delight and satisfaction, to be the happy instrument in restoring the good Eneas. When he arrived at Joppa, he beheld an affecting sight indeed; the body of the pious Dorcas surrounded by indigent widows drowned in tears, deploring the loss of their benefactress, by whose bounty and industry they had been clothed. What then must have been his sensations when, in answer to his prayers, her soul was restored to re-animate the body, and while he witnessed the rapturous delight of the poor widows when they beheld her alive! This miracle was publicly known throughout Joppa, and greatly promoted the propagation of the Gospel.

There is one particular in Dorcas's character, which has a peculiar claim to the attention of the female sex, as it points out a mode of charity which they alone can practise; I mean, that of *making* coats and garments for the poor. Many an industrious poor woman, for want of having been taught to use her needle, is utterly incapable, through ignorance, of clothing herself and family, even when furnished with the materials for doing it. Therefore a benefit may often be doubled, by exerting *industry* as well as *bounty* for their relief.

Peter, willing to improve so favourable an opportunity, staid for some days at Joppa, at the house of one Simon a tanner, from whence he was sent for to Cesarea on a very extraordinary occasion.

SECTION LXVII.

CORNELIUS THE CENTURION, AND HIS FRIENDS, CONVERTED AND BAPTIZED BY PETER.

From Acts, Chap. x.

THERE was a certain man in Cesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

A de.

A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway :

He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God, coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius ;

And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, LORD ? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter.

He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side : he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household-servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually : and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

And he became very hungry, and would have eaten : but while they made ready, he fell into a trance.

And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth :

Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter ; kill and eat.

But Peter said, Not so, LORD ; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

And the voice spake unto him again the second time,
What

What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice; and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men who were sent from Cornelius, had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called and asked whether Simon who was surnamed Peter, lodged there.

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel, to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

And the morrow after they entered into Cesarea: and Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

But Peter, took him up, saying, Stand up: I myself also am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in and found many that were come together.

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep com-
pany

pany with, or come unto one of another nation: but God hath shewed me, that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for; I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner, by the sea-side; who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast done well that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;

But in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by JESUS CHRIST: (he is LORD of all:)

That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him.

And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both
in

in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree.

Him God raised up the third day and shewed him openly. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead.

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins.

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The subject of this section requires very particular consideration, as an argument has been drawn from the beginning of Peter's discourse to Cornelius, that there is no necessity for becoming disciples of CHRIST; but that it is sufficient if we live according to the principles and light of nature, since every one that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. This text,

taken

taken by itself, and thus understood, has emboldened many persons to put their salvation on their own strength, in opposition to the method revealed and declared by the *Son of God*. This error is so common, that it is essentially necessary for us to understand the true meaning of the Apostle, in order to guard our minds against it.

The Jews (as has been frequently observed) had a notion, that the blessings of the promised MESSIAH were peculiar to themselves, and not to be extended to any other nation or people whatever; looking upon them as aliens from God, and not under his care and protection. St. Peter had this opinion in common with his countrymen, till he found by comparing Cornelius's vision with his own, that God had determined to admit the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, into the church of CHRIST. On which he opened his mouth and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him;" the meaning of which is, "I now at length perceive, that God hath not confined his mercies to a particular nation only, but that all are capable of inheriting the promises in CHRIST JESUS, who are duly prepared by righteousness and the fear of God."

This will farther appear to be the true interpretation, if we examine the case of Cornelius, and what the acceptance was that *he* found. Cornelius was a *Gentile*, and one of the best of them, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway: and yet his goodness did not make it unnecessary for him to become a Christian. The heavenly vision was not sent to satisfy him that his righteousness was sufficient, and that he had no need to look out for farther assistance or direction.

tion. On the contrary, it was sent to inform him where he might seek and find a proper instructor. St. Peter had a vision also, to prepare him to do the duty of an Apostle to a Gentile Centurion; and, in obedience to the heavenly warning, he baptized him with water; for St. Peter now understood, that men of all nations who do righteously are accepted with God. But he did not from this infer, that those who did the best upon the light of nature, had no need of any other teacher; for had he thought so, he would not have instructed Cornelius in the knowledge of CHRIST, and baptized him in his name. St. Peter therefore certainly meant, that all *Gentiles*, duly prepared, were capable of the blessings of the Gospel through the mercy of God, in opposition to his former error, that none but *Jews* had such a privilege. And the Apostle undoubtedly understood, that the *best* of the Gentiles had need of the *Gospel*, or else his commendation of the goodness of God amounted only to this, that he perceived that God would give to the honest-minded Gentiles, who feared him and did righteously, that which they had no occasion to receive.

Hence we may understand what is the true notion of that acceptance, which St. Peter says the Gentiles of all nations are entitled to, through the mercy of God. We will next consider the *terms* to which he has *limited* this privilege. He does not say, that men of all nations are accepted of God, but that *in every nation* he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. The meaning of this will be best explained from a text in one of St. Paul's Epistles *, “ *Without FAITH it is impossible to please GOD: for he that cometh to him must believe*

* See Heb. xi. 6.

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" which implies, that a man cannot offer himself to God, much less enter into the covenant of his mercy, without a firm persuasion of his *being*, and a due notion of his attributes; which two articles of belief infer a just fear of God, as the supreme Governor of the world, and a desire to please him, as the disposer of rewards and punishments, according to the good or evil that we do. This then is the faith, *without which* it is impossible to please God—the faith *with which* men of every nation are accepted by him. From the light of REASON only, men may discover the *Being* of a God, and the necessity of righteousness, in order to obtain his favour; the Gospel confirms this doctrine; and supposing men *possessed of this knowledge*, shews them the perfect rule of righteousness prescribed by God himself, which reason, unassisted by divine revelation, could never have discovered.

Cornelius was as *perfectly righteous* as the light of reason could make him, yet St. Peter was sent to convert him to Christianity; which Cornelius, convinced of the *insufficiency* of his *own righteousness*, and glad to have a guide to direct his way, was willing to embrace. From which we may infer, that the *best* of the Gentiles, even those who worshipped the *true* God, stood in need of the assistance of the GOSPEL of CHRIST to make themselves *secure* of obtaining the *end* of their *hopes*, *glory* and *immortality* from God, who is the rewarder of those who diligently serve him.

Had Cornelius died as he lived, a devout Gentile in the fear of God, full of alms and prayers, without being called to the knowledge of CHRIST, we may from many texts of scripture suppose, that he would have found rest to his soul through the mercy of God, and
sat

sat down with *Abraham* and *Isaac* in the kingdom of God; but his happiness in this world at least was certainly increased, and his obedience rendered more acceptable to God, by having life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel. But what would have been his case if he had *rejected* the call, and *refused* to *hearken* to St. Peter, and had insisted on his own merit and virtues in opposition to the grace that was offered him through the Gospel? He would have no longer maintained the character of one fearing God, neither could he have prayed any more to God to guide and direct him, after having refused to be guided and directed by him. Nor would his alms have been an acceptable offering, after he had renounced that obedience which is better than sacrifice, and which is the only thing that can sanctify our imperfect works.

If *reason* and *natural religion* teach us that it is our duty to please and obey God, they cannot teach us to reject the counsel of God, and follow our own will in opposition to that of our Maker. Though the divine Will has not been made known to us as it was to Cornelius by a vision, we have been early instructed in the knowledge of the Gospel, and called to the faith and obedience of JESUS CHRIST through the ordinary ministrations of the church. The voice of God is the same, whether he speaks by his Apostles or his Angels; and whatever the condition of those may be, who never heard of the LORD who bought them, *ours* is certainly very bad, if having heard of him we reject and despise him. 'Tis one thing not to believe in CHRIST because we know him not, and another to know him and disbelieve him. Though such ignorance may be our excuse, yet such knowledge must be our condemnation.

Let

Let us therefore imitate the good centurion, not merely in his *moral conduct*, but in an *humble subjection of soul* to the *divine authority*, that we may be disposed to receive salvation *in the way God has been graciously pleased to appoint* *.

SECTION LXVIII.

PETER GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH CORNELIUS.—THE GOSPEL PREACHED AT ANTIOCH.

* After Peter and his brethren had continued some days with Cornelius they returned to Jerusalem, where the disciples were greatly alarmed at an imperfect report which had reached them, that some of the uncircumcised Gentiles had been admitted into the church by baptism; and as soon as they saw Peter, they questioned him with surprise and displeasure concerning his proceedings at Cesarea. Upon this Peter related the whole matter, informing them of his vision and that seen by Cornelius—the journey he took in consequence of it—the manner in which he found the good centurion and his friends assembled—and the extraordinary circumstance of the HOLY SPIRIT'S descent in the visible form of cloven tongues, as it did on the Apostles in the beginning of their ministry; which made him seriously reflect on our LORD'S words, "John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the HOLY GHOST." He therefore considered this as a sign, that God accepted the Gentiles, and said he should have thought it the

* What I have given by way of Annotations and Reflections to this section is an abstract of Bishop Sherlock's discourse on Acts, x. 34, 35.

† Acts, ch. xi.

highest

highest presumption, and a direct opposition to God, to have refused doing his part towards initiating them into the church by baptism.

When the Apostles heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then had God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

It was related, that when the persecution raged against the Christians after the martyrdom of Stephen, the disciples fled to different places. We have an account of some of their proceedings during that period of sacred history which has been under our consideration. Some of them, it seems, travelled as far as Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but the Jews. By some of these disciples were natives of Cyprus and Cyrene, who having heard of Cornelius's conversion, ventured, in imitation of Peter, to preach the Gospel to the Greeks at Antioch, many of whom through the grace of God believed. The report of this reached the ears of the disciples at Jerusalem, who desirous to confirm their new converts in the faith, sent Barnabas to instruct them, who being a devout man took abenevolent pleasure in seeing the good work so happily begun, and exhorted them to be steady in the purpose they had formed. After a short stay among them, the number of disciples increased so much, that Barnabas found it necessary to have an assistant ; on which account he went to Tarsus to seek Paul, who agreed to accompany him, and accordingly went with Barnabas to Antioch, where they took up their abode for a year, and taught considerable numbers of people ; and the disciples were called *CHRISTIANS first at Antioch*. They were before this called by the Jews *Nazaranes* or *Galileans* ; and by each other *Disciples*, *Believers*, *Brethren*, or *Saints* ; but they now assumed the name of their great Leader.

Whilst

Whilst Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch, certain prophets who were divinely inspired came to them from Jerusalem; and one of them, whose name was Agabus, foretold a famine, which accordingly happened in the reign of the emperor Claudius Cæsar, who was then on the throne. In consideration of the distress this might bring with it, the disciples at Antioch resolved to raise a contribution towards the relief of the brethren who dwelt in Judea, who being very numerous had a great many poor among them. This benevolent scheme was put in execution, and the money sent by Barnabas and Saul.

SECTION LXIX.

HEROD HAVING SLAIN JAMES, IMPRISONS PETER,
WHO IS DELIVERED BY AN ANGEL.

From Acts, Chap. xii.

Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

And he killed James the brother of John with the sword;

And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

And when Herod would have brought him forth, the

same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains : and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

And, behold the angel of the LORD came upon him, and a light shined in the prison : and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals : and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

And he went out, and followed him ; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel : but thought he saw a vision.

When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of his own accord : and they went out, and passed on through one street, and forthwith the angel departed from him.

And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the LORD hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark ; where many were gathered together, praying.

And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

But

But Peter continued knocking : and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the LORD had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go, shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers what was become of Peter.

And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and there abode.

And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon : but they came with one accord to him ; and having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace ; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, set upon a throne, and made an oration unto them.

And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

And immediately the angel of the LORD smote him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

But the word of God grew and multiplied.

And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* After the death of John the Baptist, *Herod Antipas*, who had caused him to be beheaded, was engaged in a

* Acts xii.

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war

war with Aretas king of Petrea, whose daughter he had divorced, that he might be at liberty to marry Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Herod was very unsuccessful in his wars, and at length having, by the advice of Herodias offended the emperor, he was deprived of his dominions, and banished to Lyons, in Gaul, where he passed the rest of his days in poverty and obscurity.

At the period of sacred history we are now considering, Herod Agrippa was tetrarch of Galilee, and had also the government of Judea, on which account he resided principally at Jerusalem. He was nephew to Herod Antipas, and brother to Herodias; he was a cruel and tyrannical prince, and abused the authority with which he was invested by the Roman emperor; for he persecuted the Christians. Herod's motive for committing such barbarous actions as are here related, was to ingratiate himself with the Jews.

The execution of James shewed the Apostles that all their miraculous power did not secure them from dying by the sword of their enemies; and gave them an opportunity of testifying their courage in pursuing their ministry*.

This wonderful deliverance of Peter shewed, that the LORD had not forsaken his church, though he had suffered so valuable a member of it as James to be cut off. James was, during our LORD's abode on earth, high in his favour; and he soon dismissed him from this mortal life, to receive him into his presence in heaven.

Herod being disappointed in his cruel attempt to destroy Peter, departed from Jerusalem, in order to celebrate games there in honour of Cæsar. The Tyrians and

* This was James the Less, as he is called, the kinsman of our LORD, and author of the Epistle which bears his name.

Sidonians had given him some offence, for which he determined to take revenge, and threatened to make war upon them; but as they were a trading people, and not able to subsist without a constant supply of provisions from Judea, they resolved to avoid it if possible; and in order to accommodate matters, they made interest with the king's chamberlain, who prevailed on Herod to listen to their proposals. To make the transaction as solemn as possible, Herod appointed a day when a grand assembly was held, and being seated in a public theatre, upon a stately throne, clothed in a magnificent robe richly wrought with silver, he made an oration to them, in which he boasted of his clemency and condescension in admitting them to favour, when he could so easily have subdued them by force. But how soon was the scene changed! He was obliged to quit the place in extreme torture, a vast number of worms bred in his bowels, and shortly after he died a miserable object, sunk as much below the common state of human nature, as his flatterers had attempted to raise him above it. But the *Gospel* flourished and increased, and the number of *believers* was considerably multiplied. Thus the opposition of its enemies, instead of extirpating *Christianity*, promoted it.

A learned author is of opinion, that Herod, in assuming the title of *King of Judea*, was guilty of *high treason against the MESSIAH*; and this arrogance, joined to his pride and cruelty, rendered him more deserving of the terrible death he suffered. It is also supposed, that his flatterers meant to draw a comparison between him and the *GLORY OF THE LORD*, which used to appear on the Mercy-seat.

The miserable end of Herod cannot fail of suggesting proper reflections to our minds on the vanity of earthly

greatness, and the fatal effects of pride and vain-glory, which corrupt the hearts of those who indulge them, and provoke the just anger of God.

SECTION LXX.

BARNABAS AND SAUL PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE GENTILES.—ELYMASTHE SORCERER SMITTEN WITH BLINDNESS.

From Acts, Chap. xiii.

BARNABAS and Saul having faithfully discharged their trust, by carrying the alms of the disciples at Antioch to those of Jerusalem, returned back to Antioch, taking with them John, whose surname was Mark. This was not Mark the Evangelist, but the nephew of Barnabas, and son of Mary, at whose house the disciples assembled to pray for Peter.

Shortly after their arrival, Barnabas and Saul were, by the immediate direction of the HOLY SPIRIT, solemnly separated from the rest of the Apostles, for the peculiar purpose of preaching to the Gentiles; and departed from Antioch by the direction, and under the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT. They first went to Seleucia, a considerable port in the Mediterranean sea. Next they sailed to the island of Cyprus, and having made a progress through it, came to Paphos, which lay on the western coast. At this place they met with a Jew, who was a magician and false prophet. His name was Barjonas, or, when translated into the Greek language, Elymas. This person was with Sergius Paulus the Roman Proconsul,

Proconsul, a steady and prudent man, very willing to hear the truth, and very capable of judging of its evidence. Sergius Paulus having heard some reports concerning Barnabas and Saul, sent for them, and desired to be acquainted with their doctrine; but Elymas the sorcerer, sensible that he should be no more regarded if their instructions were attended to, by a variety of insinuations endeavoured to prevent the Proconsul's receiving the faith. Then Saul, who from this time is called Paul, being filled with the powerful impulse of the HOLY SPIRIT, fixed his eyes on him, and said, "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the LORD? And now behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season."

Elymas was instantly struck with blindness, so that he was obliged to seek for somebody to lead him by the hand to find the door. When the Proconsul beheld this signal judgment, he regarded it as sufficient evidence of the truth of the Gospel, and was struck with admiration at the wonderful grace of God.

When Paul and Barnabas departed from Paphos they went to Perga in Pamphylia, and John, surnamed Mark, who had hitherto accompanied them, withdrew himself from them, and went back to Jerusalem; but the two Apostles steadily pursued their course till they arrived at Antioch in Pisidia, and entering into the Jewish synagogue on the sabbath, they sat down among those who worshipped there. After a portion of the *Law* and the *Prophets* had been read according to custom, the rulers of the synagogue, knowing the characters of Paul and Barnabas, and being desirous of hearing from their own mouths the doctrine they taught, sent one of their

inferior officers to them, saying, “ Men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation which may conduce to the edification of the assembly, declare it freely.” Then Paul stood up, and waving his hand to render the audience more attentive, he began a discourse, in which he briefly recounted the deliverance of Israel from Egypt—their settlement in Canaan—the ungrateful returns which they made to Divine goodness, when they rejected the LORD from being King over them—the character of David, and the promise made to him, that from him should proceed the MESSIAH. The apostle then asserted, that GOD, in remembrance of this promise, had raised up unto Israel JESUS to be a SAVIOUR, whose coming John the Baptist had foretold; yet, notwithstanding the undoubted proofs that were given of his being the MESSIAH, the Jewish rulers had condemned him to be crucified; but GOD had raised him from the dead, according to the predictions of the royal Psalmist. Paul therefore exhorted his hearers with the utmost earnestness to hearken to the glad tidings he brought, and to accept with joy the gracious offer he was commissioned to make them of remission of sins, and justification or acquittance from GOD, upon repentance, for their greater offences; for which they could not, by the Law of Moses, make atonement, nor obtain assurance of the mercy of GOD. He therefore besought them, as they valued the happiness of their immortal souls, not to reject the message he brought them, but to remember the awful language of the prophet Isaiah, “ Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare unto you.” This was the substance of Paul’s discourse, to which the Jews at that time made no reply; but whilst they were going out, the

the Gentiles, of whom many were through curiosity assembled, entreated him to repeat his instructions on the ensuing sabbath.

When the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who gave them farther exhortations to confirm them in the faith.

On the next sabbath day, almost the whole city assembled together to hear the word of God; but the Jews continued strongly prejudiced against the message which had been delivered to them, and seeing the Gentiles collected in such numbers, they were filled with zeal for the honour of their law and nation; and not contented with contradicting and reviling Paul and Barnabas, they blasphemed, by representing the cause they were carrying on as a wicked one. The two Apostles, perceiving that no good impression could be made upon them, addressed them, saying, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the LORD commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. The Gentiles hearing, that the way was now opened for their being admitted into covenant with God, and the benefits of the MESSIAH's kingdom, rejoiced greatly; and as many as were desirous of eternal life believed, and openly embraced the Gospel, which others who were indifferent about their future state neglected. They now united their labours with those of Paul and Barnabas, by which means the word of the LORD was published throughout all that region. But the Jews, provoked at this success, stirred up some women of rank, who were zealous for

the *Mosaic Law*, and these influenced their relations and dependants against the Gospel. The Jews also applied themselves to the magistrates of the city to suppress the new doctrine, and thus raised a persecution against the two Apostles, and expelled them from their coasts; on which, agreeably to their LORD's instructions, they shook off the dust from their feet as a testimony against them, and departed to Iconium; but the disciples who were left behind were filled with great joy, having received the gifts and graces of the HOLY SPIRIT, which enabled them to carry on the interest of the Christian church after the Apostles were gone from them.

SECTION LXXI.

PAUL AND BARNABAS GO TO LYSTRA.—A LAME MAN CURED.

From Acts, Chap. xiv.

AND it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude, both of the Jews, and also of the Greeks, believed.

But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the LORD, who gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

And when there was an assault made, both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews, with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

They

They were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about :

And there they preached the Gospel.

And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked :

The same heard Paul speak ; who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

And they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Which when the Apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

And saying, Sirs, why do you these things ? we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein ;

Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people; and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

And when they had preached the Gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch.

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the LORD, on whom they believed.

And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia

And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

And there they abode long time with the disciples.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The cure of the cripple bore such evident marks of a Divine energy, that even unenlightened heathens perceived

ceived it; but their ignorance made them attribute the *power* to those who were only the *instruments* of it.

Jupiter and Mercury were among the principal idols of the Gentiles. Jupiter was reckoned the highest of these imaginary deities, and Mercury was the supposed god of eloquence; it was customary to offer oxen in sacrifice to Jupiter, but it was the highest superstition to imagine that these false deities (which were in fact *nothing*) were come down to the earth in the likeness of men.

There was, however, an intention of piety amidst all this superstition, which raised compassion in the benevolent minds of the Apostles, who exhorted them to turn from their *vanities* unto the *living* God, who they might know *as such* by the light of *reason* only; for though God did not reveal to the Gentiles for many ages *the fulness of his grace*, his *visible* works proclaimed his *existence* and *providence*.

How wonderful it is to read of the revolutions which happened in the first age of Christianity! The very men who would have paid divine honours to Paul and Barnabas, an instant after treated them as malefactors, and Paul would have lost his life by their barbarity, had he not been restored through the power of the SON OF GOD, by which he was enabled immediately to undertake a journey, and he and his associate Barnabas, in defiance of all difficulty and danger, continued, wherever they went, to exhort the people and encourage the disciples, appointing elders to preside over the different churches they established.

It is very pleasing to attend these two holy men in all the stages of their undaunted and successful course, to behold them in imagination converting some, confirming others, and, through the power of their Divine Master, scattering blessings wherever they went. Let
their

their exhortations and example engage us to continue stedfast in the Christian faith, whatever tribulations we are called to pass through.

SECTION LXXII.

PAUL AND BARNABAS GO TO JERUSALEM.

From Acts, Chap. xv.

PAUL and Barnabas continued a considerable time at Antioch; but a question arising among the brethren, whether *circumcision* was necessary to salvation, a great dispute ensued, and Paul and Barnabas at length determined to go to Jerusalem, and consult the Apostles and Elders about it. As they passed through Phenice and Samaria, they gave great joy to the Christians in those parts, by relating what success their labours had had among the Gentiles. When arrived at Jerusalem, the Apostles and Elders highly approved of their proceedings; but there was great contention concerning the question of circumcision. However it was at length determined, agreeably to the counsel of James (who presided over the church at Jerusalem) to write letters to the Gentiles, requiring them to abstain from such acts as gave the greatest offence to the Jewish converts, particularly from eating things sacrificed to idols, or that were strangled, and from blood; as it was impossible there should be any harmony among them till they did so.

The letters were sent by Paul and Barnabas, accompanied by Judas and Silas. There was universal satisfaction among the Gentiles, when they found there was no necessity for them to submit to the ceremonial law of Moses.

Moses. Judas and Silas being *prophets*, exhorted the people ; and, after continuing with them a short time, the former returned to Jerusalem, but the latter remained with Paul and Barnabas, who, in conjunction with many others that were prophets and teachers, continued to preach the Gospel with success. After some time, Paul proposed to make a circuit, and visit every city, in which they had formerly taught. Barnabas approved of his scheme, and was desirous of taking John, whose surname was Mark, with them ; but Paul thought Mark not deserving of this honour, as he had before withdrawn himself from them. This occasioned a sharp contention between the two Apostles, which ended in a separation : so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed to Cyprus, his native place ; and Paul, accompanied by Silas, set out on his return to Cilicia, having been, as on a former occasion, recommended by the brethren to the *grace of God*. At Derbe he met with a pious young man whose mother was a Jewess, but his father a Greek. The name of the youth was Timothy. Paul resolved to take him with him, and solemnly consecrated him to the ministerial office.

From the dispute which took place between Paul and Barnabas, we learn that the Apostles were subject to infirmities like other men, and that they were not *constantly* under the influence of *Divine inspiration*, but in common affairs were left to the guidance of their own understanding ; which indeed, was so improved by the revelations made to them, that they generally knew what was most proper to be done : but in every thing relating to their ministry they had encouragement to expect Divine aid and direction, if they prayed for it. This neither Paul nor Barnabas on the present occasion did, and, therefore, the dispute ended as such matters usually do, when men suffer passion to rule them.

Let us think of the unhappy consequences of this dispute, and consider it as an admonition against anger and passion ; for if they were powerful enough to divide the friendship of two of the best men who ever lived in the world, what effects may not the indulgence of them produce among inferior Christians ? And it will be no excuse to us, that Paul and Barnabas had a quarrel : for it is very evident, that their conduct is not in this particular proposed as an *example* to us, but held out as a *warning*.

SECTION LXXIII.

PAUL AND SILAS CONTINUE THEIR JOURNEY — THEY ARE CAST INTO PRISON, AND MIRACULOUSLY DELIVERED.

From Acts, Chap. xvi.

PAUL accompanied by Silas and Timothy, and, as it is supposed, joined by Luke*, pursued his travels, sometimes by sea, and sometimes by land, under the particular influence of the HOLY SPIRIT ; by which he was restrained from visiting several places he intended, and directed to others, either because his presence was more necessary there, or perhaps on account of the conceited wisdom of the inhabitants of the other places. It was intimated in a vision to Paul, that the Macedonians were properly disposed to receive the Gospel ; he therefore went thither, and met with some remarkable occurrences.

At Philippi, a city of Macedonia, dwelt a Gentile wo-

* The reason Luke is supposed to have been of the party is, that from this time he continues the history as if a companion, using the word *we* instead of *they*.

man, named Lydia, who, like Cornelius, was a worshipper of the true God, and earnestly desirous of *eternal life*; she was, therefore, assisted with *Divine grace*, and by this means enabled fully to understand Paul's doctrine; in consequence of which she desired to be baptized. Her family followed her example, and they were all initiated into the Christian religion. Full of gratitude and respect, Lydia, with the most pressing importunity, insisted that Paul and his companions should take up their abode at her house, which they accordingly did. Whilst they continued her guests, Paul cast out an evil spirit which possessed a young woman, who gained her master money by the extravagant things she uttered under the influence of the evil spirit, pretending to foretell future events. We will not particularly examine this story, as we are not liable to such possession; it is sufficient to say, that the maid's master being enraged that his profits were at an end, laid hold on Paul and Silas, and brought them before the magistrates as disturbers of the peace, and introducers of a new religion. The magistrates, without any legal trial, gave orders for their being scourged, which was executed with great severity; after which Paul and Silas were cast into prison, and their feet confined in the stocks, which must have been very painful after the bruises they had received. Instead of suffering their spirits to sink under this misfortune, they sought relief in *devotion*; and having prayed, they sang an hymn of praise to God, for the honour they had in suffering in his cause. The other prisoners listened to them with surprise, when suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awakening out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors

doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. “ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm ; for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas ; and brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? And they said, Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the LORD, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes : and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”

As soon as it was day, the magistrates sent the officers who had beaten Paul and Silas the day before, to desire the jailer to let them go ; but Paul judged it proper to refuse being set at liberty privately, and sent them word, that as they were Roman citizens as well as themselves, they insisted upon being conducted by them out of the prison respectfully. When the magistrates heard they were *Roman citizens*, they were glad to accommodate matters, and accordingly waited on them to the house of Lydia. Paul and Silas related the circumstances of this affair to their fellow Christians, and gave them comfortable assurances from their own experience, that whatever trials any of them might be exposed to for the sake of the Gospel, they could be supported under them, and then departed.

Paul's refusal to be dismissed privately, and his insisting on the magistrates conducting him and his fellow-prisoner in an honourable manner out of their place of confinement, proceeded not from *pride*, but true *magnanimity*.

nimity and *humanity*. They had received, as *ministers of the Gospel*, a notorious insult; and it was necessary, for the honour of the *cause*, that reparation should be made to them in the sight of the people. It was also proper that the magistrates should be rebuked and mortified; otherwise, the passive submission of the Apostles might have occasioned other innocent persons to suffer in the same manner. Paul sought no revenge, neither did he require the magistrates to *buy their peace* with a sum of money; for he knew how to join the tenderness of the Christian with the dignity of the Roman citizen, and contended for his *own rights* no farther than the honour of religion and the benefit of other Christians required.

SECTION LXXIV.

PAUL AND SILAS PREACH AT THESSALONICA AND ATHENS.

From Acts. Chap. xvii.

WHEN Paul and Silas quitted Phillippi, they went forward on their journey, and visited many places. They converted a great multitude of devout Greeks, and among them a number of illustrious women; but they met as usual with opposition from the Jews, and Paul was obliged, in order to avoid persecution, to move from place to place. At length he was by the brethren conducted to the celebrated city of Athens, from whence he sent an order for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

Athens was at that time the seat of learning, science, and politeness; but in respect to religion, entirely devoted

voted to superstition and idolatry: the Athenians worshipped a great variety of false deities, Jupiter, Juno, &c. Paul with a benevolent concern beheld this famous city boasting indeed of its *freedom*, but under the very worst kind of *slavery*; he therefore resolved to take every opportunity of publishing the glad tidings of salvation there; and for this purpose he discourses freely on the subject with the Jews in their synagogues, and with the Athenians in their places of public resort.

* “ There were amongst the Athenians many *sects* of *philosophers*. Each of these had his *disciples* or followers, to whom he taught his particular opinions. Whoever pretended to learning or virtue, the greatest magistrates, generals, and even kings, ranged themselves under their discipline, and were trained in their schools. All their sects made it a maxim not to disturb the popular worship of established religion; but under these limitations they taught very freely whatever they pleased, and no *religious* opinions were more warmly supported than those which they delivered were by their followers. Each of these sects maintained some notions directly opposite to those of the Gospel, and none believed in the resurrection of the dead. St. Paul had before been engaged with many of the *followers* of these different sects; but by visiting Athens, he exposed his doctrine to the particular examination of the *philosophers* who presided over them. The first he had to contend with were the Epicureans and Stoicks. The former of these entirely denied Divine Providence, and held the world to be merely the effect of *chance*; asserting *pleasure* to be man’s *chief good*, and limiting his *existence* to the *present state*. And the latter maintained the doctrine

* Lord Lyttelton on St. Paul’s Conversion.

of an *universal necessity*, and proudly exalted their *Wise Men*, as if they were in some respects *superior* to the *Deity* himself. Some of these pretended philosophers were present at Paul's discourses ; and finding his doctrine so contrary to their notions, they spoke of him as a *trifling fellow*, a mere *babbler of words without meaning*. Others said, he is a proclaimer of *foreign deities*, because he preached to them *JESUS* and the *resurrection*. As a great crowd gathered about Paul, they conducted him to a celebrated hill near the citadel, which was called Mars Hill, or the Areopagus. At this place was the hall of justice, where the magistrates sat ; and here also, as in a theatre, learned men used to meet to communicate their opinions. The court of justice which sat here was famous for its equity. If any denied a God, he was liable to the censure of the judges ; nor might any new *Deity* be admitted without their approbation. Hither they brought Paul, not to be tried as a criminal, but that his doctrine might undergo a public examination. When he was come thither they applied unto him, saying, May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest, is ? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know therefore what these things mean. Now this was quite agreeable to the Athenians in general, as well as to the strangers who came to study at Athens ; many of whom, having great leisure, were in perpetual search of something new, which might amuse their speculative and curious tempers." If Paul had had nothing to trust to but his own *natural faculties*, his own *understanding, knowledge, and eloquence*, as he was unacquainted with the kind of learning taught at Athens, he would certainly have been intimidated from declaring any *new doctrine* before such a numerous assembly of persons prejudiced against him : but trusting in the aid
of

of the HOLY SPIRIT, he boldly stood up in the middle of the Areopagus, and addressed them as follows: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For, as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is LORD of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation: that they should seek the LORD, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being: as certain also of your own poets have said, *For we are also his offspring*. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art, or man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." When Paul had proceeded so far as to mention a *resurrection of the dead*, he was interrupted, some of his audience ridiculing it, and others, satisfied for the present, coldly promised to hear him upon the subject another time; so Paul, finding the greatest part of the assembly resolved to *resist* his doctrine, departed from

from Mars Hill. But though his discourse was so generally slighted, some few men adhered to him, amongst whom was Dionysius the Areopagite, a magistrate of great honour and dignity ; and also a woman of considerable rank in the city, and some others not particularly mentioned.

* “ The prudence of St. Paul’s behaviour on this occasion was very remarkable, and proved that he was neither an *impostor* nor an *enthusiast*. Had he been the former, he would have retracted his doctrine to save his life. Had he been the latter, he would have lost his life without trying to save it by innocent means ; but he did neither the one nor the other. He availed himself of an altar which he had found in the city inscribed to the UNKNOWN GOD, and pleaded, that he did not propose to them the worship of any *new* GOD, but only explained to them one whom their government had already received. By this he avoided the *law*, and escaped being condemned by the Areopagus, without departing in the least from the *truth of the GOSPEL*, or *violating the honour of God*.”

We find that in addressing himself to Pagans, Paul made use of very different arguments to what he employed when he preached to the Jews. Instead of talking of the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the MESSIAH, he endeavoured to prove, in opposition to their notions of a *plurality* of GODS, that there was *one* SUPREME BEING, the Maker of all things, who originally created the human species, and caused all succeeding nations to proceed from them, which were now so increased as to cover the face of the earth ; that he had allotted to each individual the time of his living in the world, and the

* Lord Lyttelton.

places

places he should inhabit, and given them all *Reason*, which would naturally incline them to seek after him, and he might, if properly sought, be easily found; for their own existence proved that there certainly must be a supreme cause, by whom all things were produced. Therefore, if they considered themselves as the offspring of God, He must consequently be more excellent than themselves; and it must be a dishonour to represent Him by *silver* and *gold*, *wood* and *stone*, materials greatly inferior to man.

He then told them, that God had for a long time overlooked those corruptions in worship, which proceeded in some measure from *ignorance*; but he now called upon *all men* to correct these irregular ideas, and govern themselves by more rational and exalted views of religion; and expressly commanded “all to whom the Gospel should be made known to *repent*, as they regarded their eternal salvation; because he had appointed a day in which he would judge the world, and pass a final sentence of happiness or misery as each individual should deserve: which he would do by *that Man* whom he had ordained, whom he had raised from the dead for that purpose.”

Here the Apostle was interrupted, or it is likely that, having taught them *repentance towards God*, he *would* have taught them also *faith in Jesus Christ*, and declared his *union with God*.

We may perceive how excellently calculated this discourse was to confute the opinions of the Epicureans and Stoicks; but the *pride of human wisdom* blinded their understandings. It certainly was their *duty* to have listened attentively, and to have examined seriously a doctrine which professed to have for its author the Su-

PREME DEITY : as they refused to do this, God justly restrained his *grace*.

In what deplorable ignorance were the heathen involved ! but it was the just punishment of their *impiety* and *self-confidence*. Instead of attending to *true wisdom*, they gave up their minds to *trifling speculations, idolatry, and superstition*.

Since we are blessed with the knowledge of the *true* God, let us adhere to him with the utmost fidelity ; be thankful that we have his written word to guide us, and make *that*, and not the *wisdom of men*, the rule both of our faith and practice.

SECTION LXXV.

PAUL GOETH TO CORINTH, AND EPHEBUS, AND
OTHER CITIES *.

AFTER Paul left Athens, he visited the polite and flourishing city of Corinth. Here he maintained himself by working at the business of a tent-maker : but while he abode there, he preached in the synagogues every sabbath-day, and persuaded many, both of *Jews* and *Greeks*, to embrace Christianity.

Conscious of many imperfections in his person and address, and considering the learning, grandeur, and politeness of the Corinthians, Paul entertained many fears, that he should not be successful in his ministry ; but he was animated by a vision, in which the LORD appeared to him by night, saying, *Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace : for I am with thee, and no*

* Acts, xviii.

man shall set on thee to hurt thee ; for I have much people in this city.

Thus encouraged, he pursued his pious labours, and continued at Corinth a year and a half, and by the divine blessing planted a flourishing church there. Paul met with a little disturbance in Corinth from the Jews, but it was put a stop to by the prudence of Gallio, the Roman magistrate, before whom he was accused.—When this tumult was appeased, he went to Ephesus, accompanied by Aquila and his wife Priscilla, two pious people, with whom he had lived at Corinth. Paul taught in the Jewish synagogues at Ephesus ; but being desirous of going to Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost, on account of meeting a great number of his countrymen, he took an affectionate leave of them, and sailed from Ephesus, from whence he had a prosperous voyage ; and having visited his friends in Jerusalem, he went to Antioch, and made another progress through the places at which he had established churches.

While he was thus employed, a certain Jew, whose name was Apollos, a native of Alexandria in Egypt, an eloquent man, and well learned in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, came to Ephesus. He had embraced the doctrine of John the Baptist, in consequence of which he preached *repentance* and *faith* in the MESSIAH. Aquila and Priscilla being then at Ephesus, expounded unto him the *Gospel Dispensation* more perfectly ; and shortly after, as he was desirous to preach in different places, the disciples at Ephesus wrote letters of recommendation for him, and he proved a very useful and zealous minister.

Paul pursued his labours with unremitting diligence and great success. He took up his residence for two years at Ephesus ; so that all the inhabitants

of

of the neighbouring province of Asia, to whom Paul had before been forbidden to preach, both Jews and Greeks, had now an opportunity of hearing the word of God*.

Paul, in the course of his ministry, having performed many wonderful miracles, and effected some extraordinary conversions at Ephesus, was desirous of visiting again the churches he had formerly planted; after which he purposed to go once more to Jerusalem, and then to Rome; but he did not immediately put this plan into execution: however, he sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia to prepare his way, and get their collection ready for the poor Christians in Judea.

About that time a great disturbance happened in Ephesus, the occasion of which was as follows:

There was at Ephesus a famous temple, dedicated to the goddess Diana. A man named Demetrius, a silversmith, employed a number of workmen, in making models of this temple, which were called *shrines*; finding that his business decreased, in proportion as Paul's preaching overcame the superstition of the Ephesians, Demetrius called his workmen together, and pointed out to them how their interest was affected by Paul's preaching against idol worship; and with a variety of arguments inflamed their minds to such a degree, that they ran about the city, crying out, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians!* and proceeded to commit outrages against the Christians. On this Paul would have surrendered himself into their hands, but his friends prevented him. At length the tumult was so great, that

* I purposely pass over the account of the exorcists, because the remarks on it would require more room than could be spared for them.—Those who wish for satisfaction on this subject, must consult the works of the learned.

one of the magistrates, a man of learning and authority, interposed, and convinced the multitude, that they were very wrong in their proceedings; because, if Demetrius had any complaint against the Christians, the law was open for his redress. On this the people retired to their habitations without farther violence. After this insurrection, Paul took an affectionate leave of his disciples, and departed for Macedonia. Having visited many places he arrived at Troas*, where he continued a week. On the evening before he left this place, a very remarkable event happened. Willing to give the disciples there as much instruction as the time would allow, after having administered the LORD'S SUPPER, which was a constant practice every LORD'S day, he preached with great fervency till midnight. A young man named Eutychus, who was one of the hearers, sitting at an open window, a great height from the ground, being overpowered with sleep, fell down, and was taken up dead. This threw the whole assembly into confusion; but through the power of CHRIST he was restored to life by the hands of Paul, to the great joy of his friends.

This incident contains a powerful caution to young persons in particular, to keep their attention fixed during the whole of divine service. Eutychus, it seems, strove to do so, but was overpowered with sleep, and therefore found mercy; but what would have been his unhappy condition had he slept and trifled as many do, during a much shorter service in the middle of the day! No one knows but the hand of death may strike him in a natural way during the course of divine service, and there is no room to hope for a miracle to recover

* Acts, xx.

him. Let us therefore endeavour to keep ourselves not only awake, but thoroughly attentive to every part of our devotions and the minister's instructions, that if we should be suddenly taken off, we may at least be found doing our duty.

The next day Paul sailed from Troas, and stopped in the course of his voyage at several places; at length he arrived at Miletus, and, not having time to visit his friends as he intended, he sent for the elders of the Ephesian church to come to him. When they were arrived, he made a very affectionate discourse, and informed them, that he was impelled by the HOLY SPIRIT to visit Jerusalem, and knew by divine inspiration that many trials would happen to him: but, said he, none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the LORD JESUS, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. And now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the HOLY GHOST hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this that after my departing, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men rise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of

his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak ; and to remember the words of the LORD JESUS, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

When he had said these things, he kneeled down and prayed with them, and with the tenderest expressions of cordial friendship took his leave of them. The thoughts that they should see him no more caused a general lamentation, and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him. They then conducted him to the ship, and commended his person to the care, and his labours to the blessing, of his divine Master.

SECTION LXXVI.

PAUL PROCEEDS ON HIS VOYAGE.

From Acts, Chap. xxi, xxii, xxiii.

PAUL and his company pursued their voyage towards *Judea*. They touched at several places, at some of which *Paul* met with disciples, who, being endued with the gift of prophecy, predicted, that many dangers threatened him at *Jerusalem* ; but he was determined to encounter them all for the sake of the Gospel. At length he with his companions arrived at the port of *Cæsarea*. Here he met with a prophet named *Agabus*, with whom* he had formerly been acquainted at *An-*

* See page 349.

tiqb.—This man took up *Paul's* girdle, and, binding his own hands and feet, as a significant and prophetic sign, said, Thus saith the HOLY GHOST, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. On this, *Paul's* friends earnestly entreated him not to go; but in full assurance that he should promote the cause of CHRIST, he resolutely answered, What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD JESUS.—His friends then desisted, saying, The will of the LORD be done; and *Paul* and his company proceeded to Jerusalem, where they were joyfully received by the brethren. The next day *Paul* took his companions with him to the house of James, where all the elders of the flourishing church at Jerusalem were assembled—*Paul* related to them what success God had given to his ministry among the Gentiles; and when they heard it, they glorified the LORD. They then observed to him, that the progress of the Gospel amongst the Jews had been so great, that there were then assembled in Jerusalem many thousands of converts: but though they believed CHRIST to be the MESSIAH; still they were in general tenacious of the *ceremonial law of Moses*: the disciples therefore counselled *Paul* to conduct himself with caution amongst them, as they were jealous of his teaching the Gentiles not to observe circumcision, and other Jewish customs.—*Paul* followed their advice; but when the Jews from Asia saw him in the Temple, they raised a tumult, under pretence that he had brought a Gentile into that part of the holy edifice which was appropriated to native Jews.—This occasioned a general confusion, and *Paul*

was violently seized by the people, who dragged him out of the Temple, that it might not be defiled with his blood.—Just as they were going to kill him, word was brought to Lysias, the chief officer of the Roman garrison, that all the city of Jerusalem was in confusion; he immediately took soldiers and centurions with him to quell the riot: the Jews therefore were stopped before they had completed their design. But Lysias drew near, and, supposing Paul to be some very criminal person, took him into custody, commanding that he should be bound with two chains; and finding the populace so enraged against him, enquired who he was, and what he had done? But the clamour was so great, that he could not comprehend the matter; he therefore ordered Paul to be carried into the castle.—The multitude followed him even to the stairs; and when he was taken away by the soldiers who guarded him, they pursued him with invectives, crying, “Away with him! away with him!” But as they were going to commit him to the castle, Paul said unto Lysias, “May I be allowed to speak to thee?” The officer, surprised at his addressing him in the Greek language, asked him, how he came to know it? supposing him to be an Egyptian, who, a short time before, had raised a sedition, and formed a dangerous confederacy of four thousand ruffians, who had committed dreadful depredations. Paul satisfied Lysias of his mistake, by informing him, that he was a Jew of the city of Tarsus, and then requested his permission to speak to the people; which having obtained, he stood upon the stairs, and beckoned with his hand unto the people, who seeing him protected by the chief captain, and curious to know what he wished to say, kept silence.—Paul then began
a dis-

a discourse in the Hebrew tongue, in which he informed them, that he was by birth and religion a Jew, educated at Jerusalem, and accurately instructed in the *Mosaic Law* by Gamaliel. He added, that he had distinguished himself by his zealous attachment to the principles he early imbibed, and had, with the strictest severity, persecuted the Christians. For the truth of these assertions, he appealed to the knowledge of the High Priest and Sanhedrim, whose commission he had obtained to go to Damascus, in order to seize upon all the followers of CHRIST.—He then related the wonderful vision which he saw on the road, and every circumstance of his conversion; and also the particulars of another vision he had in the Temple of Jerusalem, in which he was commanded by the LORD to leave that city, and go amongst the Gentiles. Hitherto the multitude listened to Paul with silent attention; but as soon as he mentioned a *mission to the Gentiles*, their rage broke out afresh, and they cried out again in the most outrageous manner, Away with such a fellow from the earth! for it is not fit that he should live. The chief captain not understanding what had passed, but perceiving that Paul had exasperated rather than appeased the people, commanded that he should be brought into the castle, and scourged in the severest manner, in order to bring him to confess his crime, and he was accordingly bound: but Paul informed the centurion who stood by, that he was a Roman citizen; on which the centurion hastened to acquaint the chief captain, who came immediately to satisfy himself of the truth of this circumstance; and Paul affirmed, that he was really a Roman citizen by inheritance. On this, those who were going to scourge him desisted from their purpose; and Lysias was also alarmed, lest his illegal proceedings

against a Roman citizen should involve him in perplexities ; however, he detained him in the castle for that night ; but the next morning commanded the Jewish High Priest and all the other members of the Sanhedrim to hold a court ; and having loosed Paul from his bonds, brought him before them. And Paul earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. Ananias the High Priest, taking this speech as an insult, commanded one that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Paul, animated on a sudden by the secret impulse of a prophetic spirit, cried out, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall* : for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law ? And they that stood by, said, Revilest thou God's High Priest ? Paul upon this, unwilling to enter upon a question so difficult, as that the divine impulse on his mind inclined him to utter these words, calmly replied, that in his sudden transport he was not aware that the person he spoke to was the High Priest ; and meant not to justify by his example disrespect to magistrates or any other man in a public character. Paul having made this apology, cast his eyes round the Court, and perceived, that part of the assembly were Sadducees and part Pharisees. On this he cried out, Men and brethren, I am by birth and education a Pharisee ; nor is there any one more zealous than myself, for the fundamental doctrine of that celebrated sect, the *resurrection of the dead*. On his addressing them in this manner, a contention arose among the different members of the Court, who were at last very clamorous, some in favour of Paul, some against him ; which alarmed the chief captain for the safety of his prisoner ; and he therefore commanded the soldiers to go down by force,

and

and take him back to the castle. And it came to pass, that the night following the LORD stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul : for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. This afforded great comfort to Paul, and animated him to bear the other trials that yet awaited him.

When it was day, some of the Jews, to the number of forty, being greatly enraged that Paul was safe, formed a conspiracy against him, and bound themselves by an oath, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed him ; and having concerted a scheme for putting it in execution, informed the chief Priests, and such of the Elders as they knew to be Paul's enemies, of their design, requesting that they would desire the chief captain to bring his prisoner before the Council again for further examination, when they would fall upon him and kill him.

This matter was not conducted so secretly, but that a nephew of Paul's got intimation of it, and immediately waited on Lysias, to whom he privately revealed it. The chief captain desired him not to let any one know he had given him this information, and dismissed him ; and then immediately took measures to prevent Paul's assassination, being in his own mind convinced that he was an innocent person. He therefore called two of his centurions in whom he could confide, and commanded them to prepare without delay two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen, to go to Cæsarea, and ordered them to begin their march at nine in the evening, and provided beasts to set Paul on, in case a change should be necessary, and to see that he was conducted with safety and expedition to Felix the governor of the province, to whom he wrote a letter,

ter, acquainting him of the insurrection that had been made on Paul's account—of his having rescued him, when he understood he was a citizen of Rome—of the accusation laid against him by the Jews—and the conspiracy formed to kill him.

The soldiers, as they were commanded, conducted Paul to Cæsarea, presented him to the governor, and delivered Lysias's letter. When Felix had read the letter, he told Paul he would examine into his cause as soon as his accusers should arrive; in the mean time he commanded him to be kept bound in Herod's Judgment hall.

At the end of five days, the High Priest Ananias, with several of the Elders, came down to Cæsarea in person, bringing with them a certain orator named Tertullus.

SECTION LXXVII.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX.

From Acts, Chap. xxiv.

AND when Paul was called forth, Turtullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee, that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words;

For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

Who also hath gone about to prophane the temple, whom

whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands.

Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.

And the Jews also assented, saying, that these things were so.

Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

Now after many years, I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult:

Who

Who ought to have been here before thee, and object if they have aught against me.

Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this very day.

And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister, or come unto him.

And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in CHRIST.

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled; and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix's room; and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In Tertullus's oration, he attempted by flattery to gain the favour of the governor, that he might the more readily believe his artful insinuations against Paul.

With

With what noble simplicity did Paul reply *! He *reasoned*, his discourse abounded with *argument* and *good sense*; what he *asserted* he *proved*, and defied his accusers to make good their allegations; nor was he afraid or ashamed publicly, before the greatest personages, to avow his principles.

Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa; she had married Azizus king of the Emesenes: but Felix being struck with her beauty, used arts to prevail on her to desert Azizus and marry him. It is probable, that Drusilla was excited by curiosity to desire to hear Paul †. The topics which the Apostle made choice of for his discourse, were particularly adapted to his hearers. He reasoned of *righteousness* or *justice* before a corrupt, avaricious, and unjust governor—of *temperance* before a man and woman, who had married in violation of all laws—of *judgment to come*, which will be a righteous tribunal indeed, where no man's poverty will expose him, no man's power will protect him.

Felix felt the weight of Paul's arguments, and, struck with remorse of conscience, *trembled*; but willing to conceal from Paul the inward perturbation of his mind, he pretended to have engagements, and dismissed him. It appears, that he was not cured of his avarice by Paul's eloquence.

How many persons in the world follow the example of Felix! When their *conscience* is awakened and their *reason* convinced, that their crimes expose them to a future dreadful judgment, instead of pursuing the views that open on their minds, they defer the consideration of them to an *uncertain hereafter*; they drive away reflection with *business* or *amusement*, till their minds grow

* See Bishop Newton on the Prophecies.

† Ibid.

callous

callous to the impressions of religion; and thus, by a repetition of sins, they involve themselves in *eternal ruin*. But let *us* pursue a better plan; let us, like St. Paul, endeavour to live in such a manner, as to have our conscience as a *friend*; which will be the case if, to the best of our abilities, we endeavour to maintain an inoffensive conduct both to God and *man*: then whatever injuries we may meet with from a mistaken world, we shall be enabled to bear them with patience, and shall be secured from the *terrors of a judgment to come*.

SECTION LXXVIII.

PAUL ACCUSED TO FESTUS.

From Acts, Chap. xxv.

WHEN Festus had taken possession of the province of Judea, he continued only three days at Cæsarea, which was the usual place of residence for the Roman governor; and then went up to Jerusalem, that he might see that celebrated city. Hearing of his arrival, the High Priest, and several persons of rank among the Jews, appeared before him with an accusation against Paul, and requested that he would send for him to Jerusalem, intending to have him assassinated on his journey. But Festus prudently answered, that it would be more convenient to himself to hear the cause at Cæsarea, and desired that Paul's accusers might accompany him in his return, which they accordingly did. They repeated their former accusation, which they could not bring witness to prove; while he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the Temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended in any thing. Festus, willing to ingratiate himself with the Jews, asked Paul if he would go up to Jerusalem to be tried?

tried? But he, knowing of the conspiracy that was before formed against his life; said, I stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof they accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar, Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

Thus Paul continued in confinement by the order of Festus, till an opportunity offered of sending him to Rome. A short time after his appeal to Cæsar, king Agrippa, the son of Herod Agrippa, who had considerable territories in that neighbourhood, and Bernice his sister, came to Cæsarea, to congratulate Festus on his arrival in his province. Among other topics of discourse which occurred, Festus mentioned Paul, and informed him of the application which the Chief Priests and Elders had made to have him tried at Jerusalem. Festus gave an account of the accusations they had brought against him at his tribunal, and of Paul's appeal to Cæsar. Agrippa replied, that he had heard much of Paul, and should like to learn from his own mouth what were his real principles. Festus, willing to oblige the king in this particular, told him, that he would command Paul to appear before him on the morrow, which he did, as is related in the next section.

SECTION LXXIX.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.

From Acts, Chap. xxv, xxvi.

AND on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing with the chief captains and principal men of the city, at Festus's commandment Paul was brought forth.

And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

Of whom I have no certain things to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and especially before thee, O king Agrippa, that after examination had, I might have something to write.

For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself;

I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

Especially, because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

My

My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews,

Which knew me from the beginning (if they would testify) that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers :

Unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night hope to come : for which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ?

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,

Which thing I also did in Jerusalem : and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests ; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme ; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

Whereupon as I went to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests,

At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me.

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And I said, Who art thou, LORD ? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But

But rise, and stand upon thy feet : for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear to thee :

Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision :

But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come :

That CHRIST should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad.

But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely : for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him : for this thing was not done in a corner.

King

King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest.

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them,

And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We may regard the oration of Paul before Agrippa, as a remarkable instance of our LORD's attention to the promise he made, that when his disciples were brought before governors and kings for his sake, he would teach them what they should speak. In it the seriousness of the Christian, the boldness of the Apostle, and the politeness of the gentleman and the scholar, are happily blended. There was no appearance of flattery in his congratulating himself on speaking before one skilled in the manners and records of the Jews, nor any arrogance in his insisting on the strictness of his former life; for he knew that this righteousness would not justify him in the sight of God. But he had no advocate to plead for him, and it was necessary for his vindication, that he should give this account of himself, and shew, that though he was hated by the Jews, he still retained the religion he was educated in, as far as it agreed with the promises made to the Patriarchs, on which he built his hopes

hopes of the *resurrection of the dead*; they were only the *ceremonials* of the *law*, and the *traditional superstitions* that he *rejected*. Paul observed, that he was not *singular* in his opinion concerning the resurrection of the dead; for the whole body of the Jewish church looked for a MESSIAH and *a life to come*: and it was no *incredible thing* that GOD, who had *almighty power*, and at first *created* all things, should *raise the dead*. Paul informed his judges, that he had not followed CHRIST from *interested views* *; for it must evidently appear, that when he embraced Christianity, he gave up the fortune he was in a fair way of advancing; the reputation he had acquired by the labours and study of his whole life, and by a blameless behaviour. He gave up his friends and relations, and banished himself from the society of those whom he had been accustomed to converse with, and that religion for which he had been remarkably zealous. He positively asserted, that he was made a convert by a *particular call from heaven*, and received a commission from CHRIST himself to preach to the Gentiles, at the very time he was going with a sanction from the High Priests to extirpate the Christians.

Having shewn by what means he became a Christian, Paul proceeded to inform his Judges, that since his conversion he had zealously taught the Christian doctrines, and borne witness with the rest of the Apostles to the fulfilment of the ancient prophecies; which he was qualified to do, not by the instruction of men, but by immediate revelation from GOD.

Agrippa began to feel the force of Paul's reasoning, but afraid to look into his own heart, he precipitately broke up the court; and Paul had only time to add the

* Lord Lyttelton.

benevolent wish, with which he concluded his oration. We understand from the private discourse between Agrippa, Festus, and Bernice, that they thought him unjustly persecuted.

St. Paul's question to Agrippa, "*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that GOD should raise the dead?*" was a very sensible one, and worthy of our serious consideration. The Almighty Being who created all things from nothing, is undoubtedly able to raise the dead to life; and he has given us many images of a resurrection in the vegetable world, and among the insect tribes: but as the great and indisputable proof, he has raised CHRIST from the dead in our nature. Let us then apply to ourselves the Apostle's benevolent wish to king Agrippa, and by embracing in its full extent the doctrine he preached, and endeavouring like him to follow our blessed LORD's example, become altogether such a Christian as he was, *consistent, sincere, and steadfast.*

Paul and his associates, viz. Luke, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and some others, were delivered to the care of Julius a centurion, who with his band of soldiers embarked with them on board a ship.

They had a voyage of the utmost danger through stormy and dark weather, which Paul by a divine impulse forewarned them of; but the owner of the ship, thinking that he should be able to make an harbour on the coast of Crete, prevailed on Julius to consent to his pursuing the voyage. In a short time after a violent wind arose, a dreadful darkness ensued, which continued for several days, so that they knew not how to steer; for they could see neither the sun by day nor the stars by night, and were obliged to lighten the ship to prevent her sinking. They first threw the merchants goods overboard, then the tackle of the ship; but notwithstanding

withstanding all their efforts, the ship struck upon the sands in a very dangerous place, and was immediately broken to pieces. In this conjuncture, the soldiers made a barbarous proposal to kill the prisoners, lest they should escape ; but Julius, who was a very humane man, and had a great esteem for Paul, prevented their putting it in execution, and commanded that those who could swim should cast themselves into the sea, and endeavour to get to land : they did so, and every man on board, being two hundred and seventy-six, either by swimming, or on planks or pieces of the wreck, got safe on shore ; as Paul had before assured them it was revealed to him by an Angel they would do, if the sailors staid in the ship, and exerted their best endeavours to save her, and trusted to divine providence, instead of taking to the boat, as some of them were going to do.

The name of the island on which they were cast was Melita, now called Malta. It was at that time subject to the Romans, but inhabited by Carthaginians, who seeing these poor wretches ready to perish with cold, treated them with great hospitality, making good fires to dry them, and using every method to comfort and refresh them.

A remarkable circumstance happened to Paul in this place. He had taken up a bundle of sticks and cast it into the fire, when a viper dislodged by the heat came out of the wood, and fastened on his hand. The islanders seeing this, and knowing that he was a prisoner, concluded, that he was certainly a murderer, who, though he had escaped the dangers of the sea, could not avoid divine justice ; but to their astonishment, they beheld him with the utmost composure shake the reptile into the fire, according to the promise of our LORD, that
those

those who believed in him should take up serpents*. The people observed him attentively for some time, expecting that the venom would soon operate, and that he would swell violently, and drop down dead; but when they saw he remained unhurt, they changed their opinion, and took him for a *deity*. So fickle is the opinion of those who form their notions of things from the light of *reason* only, unguided by *Divine revelation*!

Publius, a Roman nobleman, who was governor of the place, hearing that a shipwreck had happened, invited the distressed strangers to his house, where they were courteously entertained for three days; at which time the father of Publius was seized with a dangerous illness, from which he was miraculously recovered by the hands of Paul. The news of this miracle spread abroad, and occasioned many who were afflicted with diseases to apply to the Apostle, who cured them, and he was in return highly honoured and respected by them. At the end of three months, Paul and his company embarked on board another ship, and shortly after landed at Naples; where meeting with some disciples, they staid a week, and then set off for Rome by land. The Christians at Rome hearing he was coming, went out to meet him. At the sight of them Paul greatly rejoiced, and returned thanks to God, being encouraged from this circumstance to hope, that these friends would be comforters to him in his confinement.—When arrived at Rome, Julius delivered his prisoners into the hands of the captain of the Emperor's guards, who being of an amiable disposition, treated Paul with all possible iudulgence, and allowed him to live in a hired house or lodgings, with one soldier only to guard him.

* See Sect. i.

Having taken three days to recover the fatigue of his journey, he called together the chief of the Jews who resided at Rome, and informed them of the cause of his imprisonment, and of the necessity he was reduced to of appealing unto Cæsar to prevent assassination; not (he said) that he had any accusation to bring against his countrymen, but he had called them together to inform them, that it was for the cause of the MESSIAH, the hope and expectation of Israel, that he now suffered imprisonment.

The Jews replied, that they knew nothing to his prejudice, but had heard the sect of the Christians greatly censured, and should be glad to have an account of their doctrine from him; he therefore appointed a day for them to attend him, at which time he explained the chief principles of the Christian faith, in a conference which lasted from morning to night; by which some of his auditors were converted, but others obstinately adhered to their former opinions: and so disagreeing, they broke up the assembly. Paul, as they departed, very properly applied to them Isaiah's (prophecy, *hearing they shall hear and not understand**, &c, and assured them that the salvation they rejected was sent to the Gentiles, who would accept it, and inherit these blessings which the Jews despised. After this Paul dwelt two years in his house, where he received all who came to him, and converted many of the Romans and others to Christianity; among whom was Onesimus, in whose favour Paul wrote his Epistle to Philemon, and afterwards employed him to carry his letter to the Colossians.

The Christians at Philippi and Macedonia hearing

* Isaiah, vi.

of his imprisonment, made a large collection for him, and sent it by their Bishop Epaphroditus, by whom he sent his Epistle to the Philippians.

Shortly after this, he had the comfort to hear, that the Christians at Ephesus continued in *faith* and *charity* as he left them; but fearing they might be perverted by false teachers, he wrote an Epistle to establish them in the doctrine which he taught them.

At this period of St. Paul's imprisonment, it is supposed St. Luke wrote his Gospel, which he composed with the Apostle's assistance.

SECTION LXXX.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEATH OF PAUL AND THE OTHER DISCIPLES.

IN the year of our Lord 63, as the learned compute, PAUL was restored to his liberty. Having converted many of the Romans, he travelled into other parts of the world; and before he passed out of Italy, is supposed to have written his Epistle to the Hebrews.

Leaving Italy, Paul sailed westward, and, as we are assured by one of the first Christian writers, preached the Gospel in Spain; and some learned authors say, that he planted a church in Great Britain; and after travelling to several other parts, went to Ephesus. From thence he passed into Macedonia, and visited the Philippians. Here he staid a considerable time, and is thought, during this period, to have written his first Epistle to Timothy, and also that to Titus. After this, Paul travelled again and went to Corinth, and afterwards went into Asia, and at length returned to Rome. Nero

the emperor was gone into Greece, and had left a wicked man named Helius, sole governor of Rome in his absence. Paul having met with Peter in that city, joined with him in endeavouring to reform the immoralities of the people, and convert them to Christianity. Their labours were crowned with great success, but they met with oppression from some, amongst whom one Alexander, a copper-smith, distinguished himself. Great disturbances ensued, which ended in the Apostles being thrown into prison, where they continued to preach. In this confinement St. Paul wrote his second Epistle to Timothy, and was shortly after, by command of Helius, beheaded.

Thus died the illustrious Apostle, after having for above thirty years, with the most exemplary zeal and piety, served God, and preached the Gospel of CHRIST. It appears from his Epistles, that Paul having fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, was desirous of being dissolved, that he might be with CHRIST; and receive the crown of righteousness, which the LORD had destined for those who should lay down their lives in testimony of his holy religion.

St. Paul's history suggests a high idea of his character. It rises upon us with additional lustre in reading his Epistles: but that must be a separate study.

It is agreed by ancient authors, that St. PETER went to Rome; but how long he resided there, is uncertain. He is said to have travelled into Africa, and afterwards westward as far as Great Britain. He suffered martyrdom by crucifixion at Rome the same day with St. Paul, in the year of our LORD 65. It is reported of him, that when he came to the cross, he requested to be crucified with his head downwards, thinking he should dishonour his LORD by suffering in the same posture as he did.

It is generally affirmed by the ancients, that after our LORD's ascension, the Apostles agreed among themselves, perhaps by *lot*, but most probably by particular direction of the HOLY SPIRIT, to *divide*, and to travel to different parts of the world. In consequence of this resolution, St. ANDREW went first into Scythia, and afterwards to many other parts, and at last sealed his doctrine with his blood at Patræ in Achaia. The occasion of his death is thus related. Having made a number of converts at Patræ, he attempted to persuade Egeas, the Proconsul of Achaia, to turn Christian; Egeas treated him with great indignity, and at last delivered him up to be crucified. That his death might be more lingering, he was fastened to the cross with cords instead of nails. It is said, that as he was led to execution, he shewed a cheerful and composed mind; and that when in sight of the *cross* he declared, that he had long expected and desired that happy hour. Having prayed and exhorted the converts to keep the faith, he was fastened to the cross, on which he hung two days, preaching to the people all the time; and when he found great interest was used to save his life, he earnestly begged of the LORD, that he might glorify him by his death, and quickly expired.

The history of St. JAMES THE GREAT (so called to distinguish him from another of the same name) is not related in any authentic history. The Spanish writers contend, that he preached in their nation. All we know for a certainty is, that he suffered martyrdom at Jerusalem, at the command of Herod Agrippa.

After many years spent in his ministry, St. JOHN was at length accused to the emperor Domitian (who persecuted the Christians towards the end of his reign) not only as a disturber of the government, but a pro-

moter of atheism, because he preached against those whom the Gentiles reputed *Gods*. By Domitian's command he was sent prisoner to Rome, where, it is said, the barbarous tyrant caused him to be cast into a cauldron of boiling oil, or rather oil set on fire; but God, who delivered the three holy children from Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, preserved the holy Apostle, so that the burning oil had no power over him. This was the *cup* his LORD foretold he should *drink of*, and that *baptism* he should be *baptized with*; and hence the ancients give him the honour of martyrdom: for though the punishment had not its effect, yet by yielding up his body to that which, according to its *nature*, must have been his death, he offered *his life* for the *glory of CHRIST*. The merciless persecutor immediately after this banished him to a desolate island called Patmos, there to be employed in digging in the mines. Here it was that he wrote his *Apocalypse*, or *book of Revelations*. These prophetic visions were vouchsafed to St. John at a very seasonable time; he was in a great measure cut off from the society of *men*, but indulged with the more immediate communications of *heaven*.

St. John lived two years at Patmos, when Domitian being slain, Nerva succeeded to the Roman empire. He was of a very different disposition from his predecessor, and recalled all those who had in Domitian's reign been cruelly condemned to exile. St. John then returned to Ephesus, where he was made bishop in the room of Timothy, who had been lately martyred. Though he was now ninety years old, he took many journeys to visit different churches, and also wrote his Epistle and his Gospel. When age and infirmity had disabled him from preaching, he used to be led to the church at Ephesus, where, instead of preaching, he only said these words,

words, “ *Little children, love one another.*” His auditors asked, why he constantly said the same thing ? He replied, because it was the particular command of his LORD, and could not be too often repeated. This holy Apostle lived till the time of the emperor Trajan, about the beginning of whose reign he departed this life, in the ninety-eighth or ninety-ninth year of his age.

St. PHILIP having for many years exercised his apostolic office, came to Hierapolis, a rich and populous city in Phrygia, where a serpent or dragon of a monstrous size was the idol. Philip, grieved to see the people so ignorant and impious, besought God by prayer, and called upon the name of CHRIST, till the monster was struck dead. After this, by his constant preaching and holiness of life, he made many converts ; but the magistrates of the city, enraged at his success, seized upon the Apostle, and caused him to be scourged, and afterwards led him to execution. Some say that he was *crucified* ; others, that being bound, he was hung up by the neck against a pillar.

St. BARTHOLOMEW is reported to have travelled as far as India, preaching the GOSPEL ; from whence, it is said, he returned to the north-west parts of Asia. He was at Hierapolis at the time of St. Philip’s martyrdom, and was then fastened to a cross, but taken down and dismissed. He afterwards removed to Albanople in Armenia, a place dreadfully over-run with idolatry, from which he endeavoured to reclaim the people ; but was seized by the governor, and condemned to death. Some say he was crucified with his head downward after having been flayed alive.

After our LORD’s ascension, St. MATTHEW is supposed to have continued with the rest of the Apostles

about twelve years, preaching in Jerusalem and Judea. Little certainty can be had what course of travels he took, or what death he died. He wrote one of the Gospels.

ST. THOMAS preached the Gospel to the Parthians, Medes, Persians, Carminians, Hyrcanians, Bactrians, and other neighbouring nations. He is said to have been thrust through with a spear by a Brachman, as he was on his knees at prayer.

ST. JAMES was, on account (as is supposed) of his relationship to our LORD, appointed by the rest of the Apostles *Bishop of Jerusalem*. In this high station, which was a situation of infinite labour and hazard, he acquitted himself so well, that he was much revered by his brethren and all the Christians.

In the interval between the departure of Festus and the coming of Albinus, the new governor of Judea, who was to succeed him, the Jews, disappointed of their designs against Paul, who had lately appealed to Cæsar, turned all their fury upon James, and resolved to kill him. They accordingly put him to death, by first throwing him down from the battlements of the Temple, and then knocking out his brains with a fuller's club. His death was greatly resented by the citizens in general, who sent secretly to Agrippa, by whom the High Priest had been advanced to his office, and he was shortly after removed. James was universally esteemed by all men, excepting those who were the professed enemies of Christianity, for he lived a most exemplary life.

ST. SIMON ZELOTES continued in worship and communion with the other Apostles and Disciples at Jerusalem after the death of CHRIST, and at the feast of Pentecost received the same miraculous gifts as they did; so that, being equally qualified with the rest, there

there is no doubt but he used his endowments for the propagation of the Gospel; but into what parts of the world he travelled is uncertain. It is related, that this Apostle suffered martyrdom by crucifixion.

ST. JUDE is distinguished in the Scripture by several names, *Jude* or *Judas*; *Thaddeus* and *Lebbæus*. His travels are also uncertain; but the Armenians regard him as the first who planted Christianity among them. It is related, that he was shot to death with arrows.

After having spent the beginning of his ministry in Judea, St. MATTHIAS is supposed to have travelled eastward. It is related that he was seized by the Jews as a blasphemer, and first stoned and then beheaded.

ST. BARNABAS, though not of the number of the twelve, is yet honoured by St. Luke and the primitive writers as an Apostle; and we find in the history of the Acts of the Apostles he makes a considerable figure.

We read, that when he and Paul had a contention about Mark, Barnabas went to Cyprus. It is said, that he did not remain constantly in that island, but returned to St. Paul again, and was sent by him to Corinth. However, it is thought that he ended his days in his own country, Cyprus, by martyrdom, in the following manner. Some Jews coming from Syria to Salamis, where Barnabas then was, enraged at the great success of his labours, seized him in the synagogue as he was preaching, and shut him up all night; and in the morning, after inflicting on him a variety of torments, stoned him to death.

ST. MARK was not the same who gave occasion to the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas, but is supposed to have been a convert of St. Peter's, who on that account calls him *his son*. His Gospel was composed at

Rome, at the entreaty of the Christians there ; it was perused by St. Peter, and ratified by his authority. It was anciently styled St. Peter's *Gospel*.

It is related, that St. Mark preached the Gospel in Egypt, and planted the church in Alexandria : and that he afterwards travelled westward, and made many converts ; that after this he returned to Alexandria, where a party of idolators broke in upon him as he was preaching, and binding his feet with cords, dragged him through the streets, till he expired under their barbarous hands.

ST. LUKE the EVANGELIST was a native of Antioch, a man of learning, and a physician ; he is also said to have been skilled in painting. At what time he became a Christian is uncertain ; but we read in the book of the Acts, which was written by him, that he was a companion and fellow-labourer with St. Paul, whom he followed in all his dangers. He is supposed to have written his Gospel and the Acts at Rome, during St. Paul's two years imprisonment. It is said that he suffered martyrdom at Rome a short time after Paul was set at liberty ; which is probable, as he would otherwise, most likely, have continued his History of the Acts of the Apostles.

SECTION LXXXI.

UPON THE OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

FROM the short account given in the foregoing section of the deaths of the Apostles, we may see how exactly our LORD's predictions concerning the treatment his disciples would meet with were verified ; and that they all continued, in defiance of the greatest difficulties

ties and dangers, nay, even of *death* itself in its most frightful shapes, to propagate the *Gospel*, by which they proved their own belief of it.

It is wonderful to think, that twelve illiterate men should have fortitude to engage in such an undertaking as that of spreading *Christianity* throughout every part of the known world * ; and that they should be able to effect it, in such an age especially, when *paganism* was in the highest repute, believed universally by the *vulgar*, and patronized by the *great* ; when the wisest men of the wisest nations assisted at its sacrifices, and consulted its oracles on the most important occasions. There is no way of accounting for the success of the Gospel in such hands, but by imputing it, as the scripture does, to the *power of GOD in CHRIST*, and the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT ; for it would have been utterly impossible for the Apostles, without Divine inspiration, to have invented a religion, the most sublime and most perfect of any that was ever made known to mankind : neither could they, without Divine assistance, have established it in the world, against the opposition of some of the most learned philosophers and most powerful princes that ever lived upon earth. We must therefore regard that part of sacred history which relates to the *Acts of the Apostles*, and which follows the account of our LORD's ascension, as the fulfilment of his repeated promises, *that he would entreat the FATHER to send the HOLY SPIRIT*, whom he called the *Comforter* or *Advocate*, to supply the loss of his personal presence.

From the account we have lately read of the miraculous operations of the HOLY SPIRIT we must be convinced, that it is the SPIRIT of GOD Himself. It also

* See Jenyns's Internal Evidence.

appears, that this SPIRIT dwells in CHRIST; that he has the power of dispensing it to the world, and that it was actually imparted to his Apostles; but as the *miraculous* operations of the HOLY SPIRIT have *ceased*, it is necessary to explain this circumstance, and shew, in what manner the *promise* of the FATHER, made by the prophets in the Old Testament, “*that he would pour out HIS SPIRIT upon all flesh;*” and that of the SON, “*that the COMFORTER or ADVOCATE, whom he would send unto the world, should abide with his followers for ever;*” were fulfilled. To give a proper idea of this, we must consider what our LORD taught concerning the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT in his discourses. From them it appears, that it was part of the great plan designed by infinite wisdom and goodness for the eternal happiness of men; that the MESSIAH, in reward of his perfect obedience to the *Divine will*, should be invested with the power of sending down the HOLY SPIRIT, as an *Advocate* to plead his cause to the world, and as a *Guide* to the Apostles in the promulgation of the Gospel, and to his followers in general, in the exercise of those duties which the Christian religion enjoins. We have seen, in the history of the Acts of the Apostles, in what a wonderful manner the HOLY SPIRIT was an *Advocate* in the cause of CHRIST, by endowing the Apostles, who were ignorant illiterate men, with the gift of tongues; enabling them to perform miracles, and suggesting to them such powerful arguments as were calculated to convince the world that Jesus was no impostor, but really the MESSIAH, the SON OF GOD; that though he had been condemned as a malefactor, he was an innocent and holy person; and that he was actually raised from the dead, exalted to the right hand of GOD, and possessed of Divine power.

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We have also seen, that the HOLY SPIRIT was *Guide* to the Apostles, leading them into the knowledge of all truths necessary for them to be acquainted with. By the *inspiration* of the HOLY SPIRIT, their minds were cleared from many erroneous notions, which they, in their LORD's life-time, entertained; and instructed in a variety of particulars, which without divine aid, they could not have comprehended. They were also, on account of their *faith*, endued with *invincible fortitude*.

The *miraculous operations* of the HOLY SPIRIT were not confined to the *Apostles* and *preachers* of the Gospel, but were also extended to their *bearers*. The minds of the best men were at that time so blinded by prejudices of various kinds, that, without the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT to open their understandings, even those who had been converted by our LORD's miracles and discourses, and believed him to be the MESSIAH, the SON of GOD, and the GREAT PROPHET, could not have comprehended all the truths of the Gospel: neither could they, unless endued with strength from above, have had fortitude sufficient to resist the allurements of the world, and adhere to their Christian profession, under the dangers and sufferings which attended it.

We perceive then, that in the *first age of Christianity*, the *miraculous gifts* of the HOLY SPIRIT and his *visible aid*, were necessary to its propagation; but when it was fully established, and the church furnished with a *written rule* both for *faith* and *practice*, and the fury of persecution abated, these *miraculous operations* might with propriety be withheld, because there was no longer any need of them; since Christianity might be maintained by *human and ordinary means*, and, in a great measure,
by

by its own rational force and power upon the minds of men.

The promises of the FATHER and the SON, which extended to *all* who should at *any time* embrace the Christian profession, relate to the *ordinary* operations of the HOLY SPIRIT—his *gentle* influence on the minds of men, by which he *insensibly* helps the infirmities of human nature, enlightens the understanding, and rectifies the will.

Without such a *divine Guide*, the *atonement* of CHRIST would have been ineffectual to man's salvation; for man would not have been able to perform the conditions required of him, nor even to have understood all things which concern his *faith* and *obedience*. 'Tis the gracious influence of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT in us, which secures all the other blessings and benefits of the Gospel, and conducts us safely through all the difficulties of a Christian course: all our strength and sufficiency are from him; to his blessed aids we owe all good inclinations, our beginning, our progress, and our perseverance in goodness and virtue. His gracious influence first disposes men to embrace and entertain the Gospel, and on their doing so with sincerity, constantly abides with them; unless he is provoked to withdraw himself, which may, and frequently does happen; for the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT do not *controul* the *will* of man; that still remains *free*, and every one has it in his power to follow or resist them. The influence and assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, in his *ordinary* operations, are indeed so *gentle* and *secret*, that it is impossible to distinguish between his immediate suggestions, and the dictates of human reason: but whoever will consider the infirmities of human nature, and at the same

same time recollect the comfort he has received under affliction, and the fortitude with which he has resisted temptation, when he has prayed for divine support and assistance, must ascribe these happy effects to the aid of the HOLY SPIRIT.

In the history of the Acts of the Apostles, we learn, that the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT was usually bestowed after *baptism*; and it is for this reason, that the children of Christian parents are *usually* baptized in their *early infancy*, from a persuasion, that their blessed SAVIOUR will receive them into his flock, and send down the HOLY SPIRIT, to dispose their tender minds for the reception of those divine truths, which their parents, or, in case of their failure, those who solemnly answer for them at the font, are under an indispensable obligation to teach them, as soon as they are capable of receiving them. We are informed, indeed, that Cornelius, and other Gentile converts with him, received the gift of the HOLY SPIRIT *previous* to their being *baptized*; but in this case it appears to have been bestowed as a reward for extraordinary piety, and also to furnish Peter with an argument for removing the scruples of those Jewish Christians who thought it unlawful to initiate Gentiles into the church of CHRIST.

There is no doubt but that the prophets, and other holy men under the Mosaic dispensation, experienced the *extraordinary* operations of the HOLY SPIRIT; and that *all*, who “feared God and worked righteousness,” whether Jews or Gentiles, were assisted by his *ordinary* influence: but till after our LORD’s ascension, *it was not poured out on all flesh*; that is to say, the effects of the HOLY SPIRIT were not so *visible*, nor did he communicate himself to the world in so *extraordinary a degree*, because the state of mankind did not require it, *before* the coming of CHRIST; and during our LORD’s life.

life-time and conversation with his disciples, his *presense* supplied all other defects; but when he left them, they were, as he calls them, *orphans*; therefore, it was requisite that, upon his departure, the *Comforter* or *Advocate* should come, to abide with them for ever. It was also proper, that after his ascension, our LORD should give them some visible token of the power and dignity to which he was advanced: besides, the Apostles had the greatest occasion that could be for the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT, on account of their own natural deficiencies, and the opposition and persecution they were likely to meet with—difficulties not to be surmounted by *natural means*. It was also highly requisite, that the minds of men should be *prepared* for the reception of the Gospel, by some signal testimony of the divine presence attending the first publication of it.

From these observations we may understand, that by the *gift of the HOLY SPIRIT* is meant, *an immediate influence and operation of the SPIRIT OF GOD upon the minds of men—inward power, strength, and assistance* communicated to Christians, enabling them to become such kind of persons as the Gospel requires them to be; and that there is an absolute necessity for the aid of the HOLY SPIRIT, to rescue us from the power and dominion of sin, to raise us to a new life, to engage us in a holy course, and to fortify our resolutions against the allurements of the world, and enable us to persevere and patiently to continue in doing and suffering the *Will of God*. Let us now consider by what means we can obtain this inestimable gift, and how we may know that we are really in possession of it.

The means of obtaining the HOLY SPIRIT, are *prayer, baptism, and repentance*. There is no cause to doubt, but that the prayers of those who dedicate their children to CHRIST in their early infancy, are accepted
for

for them ; and that, during their years of *ignorance*, they are regarded as members of his church ; but as soon as children are capable of committing *actual sin*, they must implore for *themselves* the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, and prepare for ratifying the vow made in their name at their baptism, by a *public profession* of their faith in CHRIST.

We may know that the SPIRIT *dwelleth in us*, if we find in our minds an ardent desire to do the will of God—a preference of *eternal* things to *worldly pursuits*—a sincere belief of the truths of Christianity—a perfect love and charity for all mankind—consolation under afflictions—and a fervent hope of salvation through the mercy of God ; for these are the FRUITS or *effects* of the SPIRIT, as we find them described in the Epistles of St. Paul and the other Apostles.

How thankful ought mankind to be, for the wonderful goodness of God, in bestowing such an inestimable gift upon them ! How grateful should every individual be to CHRIST, for directing it to themselves in particular ! Let us, then, keep our minds constantly prepared to comply with the motions and suggestions of the HOLY SPIRIT, by leading a life of obedience and righteousness ; and take heed, that we do not, by any wilful disobedience to the revealed will of God, transmitted to us in the Scriptures, resist his HOLY SPIRIT ; but since he vouchsafes to *dwell* in us, let us do nothing that is unworthy of so Divine and heavenly a guest. Let the thoughts of his presence fill our hearts with a continual awe and reverence of him, and engage us effectually to cleanse ourselves from every evil inclination. Let us earnestly implore the assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, and continually depend upon him for his grace and assistance, in an humble sense of our own weakness

ness and fickleness, and the inconstancy of our best purposes and resolutions. If we thus *pray*, we shall certainly *obtain*; but we must *pray*, and we must also *act*; for God does not *force* the *will*, He only inclines and aids it by the suggestions and motions of the HOLY SPIRIT. If we comply and co-operate with him, we shall be happy; if we resist and rebel against him, the *grace* of God is offered us in vain, and our ruin and destruction is of *ourselves*.

Having seen in what manner our LORD's predictions, relating to the descent of the HOLY SPIRIT on those who *adhered* to him, were fulfilled, let us now enquire concerning the fate of those who rejected the Gospel in the first age of the church*.

SECTION LXXXII.

OUR LORD'S PREDICTIONS CONCERNING THE PUNISHMENT OF THE JEWS, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

AND as he went out of the Temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here.

And Jesus said unto him, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.

* To supply the deficiencies of these Annotations relating to the HOLY SPIRIT, I must beg leave to refer my readers to the excellent series of discourses on the subject, by Archbishop Tillotson, in his 2d vol. folio edition, from whence they are chiefly extracted. I could not offer every argument that occurred to me, without making many extracts from the *Epistles*; and this I was unwilling to do, as the texts are capable of a fuller and more satisfactory explanation in their *proper places*.

And

And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you;

For many shall come in my name, saying, I am CHRIST: and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.

But before all these they shall lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.

And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son: and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. There shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.

And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,

solation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand):

When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know ye that the desolation is nigh.

Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them who are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

For these are the days of vengeance, that all things that are written might be fulfilled.

Let him who is on the house-top, not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes.

And wo unto them who are with child, and to those who give suck in these days. And pray ye, that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring:

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after these things that are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is CHRIST, or there, believe him not;

For there shall arise false CHRISTs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that
were

were it possible, they should deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before.

Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert, go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers, believe it not.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:

So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at your doors.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

Heaven

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was foretold by the prophet Malachi, that there would be *a great and dreadful day of the LORD*, in which *all the wicked shall be consumed*. Joel also alluded to it, when he predicted *the effusion of the HOLY SPIRIT*; and our LORD himself frequently referred to these prophecies, and expressly foretold the punishment and rejection of the Jews; particularly in the parables of the *fig-tree*, of the *ten servants*, the *wicked husbandmen*, and the *marriage-feast*. His blasting the barren fig-tree was an emblem to the same effect.

In his last severe reprehension of the Scribes and Pharisees our LORD declared, that upon the Jews of *that generation* should come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias; and he then lamented, *that their house would be left to them desolate*, or their habitation laid even with the ground.

On his disciples' desiring to be informed *when* these things which he foretold would come to pass, our Lord checked their curiosity; but told them what signs would precede, and how to preserve themselves from the impending destruction; and gave them a particular caution to beware of false CHRISTs and false prophets, as he had formerly done to the multitude in his sermon on the Mount.

The event soon proved, that this was an affectionate and necessary admonition, intended to preserve his disciples and the Jews from the danger of follow-
ing

ing deceitful and seditious leaders: for about a year after his crucifixion, Simon Magus * pretended to be some great one, and to have the power of God; and a number of impostors successively arose, who persuaded the multitude of Jerusalem to follow them into the deserts, pretending that they could display evident wonders and signs through the power of God: and even at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, false prophets fatally prevailed on many, who might have escaped the conflagration, to stay in the Temple, under pretence that they would receive signs of deliverance till they perished in the flames.

The next circumstances mentioned by our LORD, as preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, are *wars, rumours of wars, &c.* This in a short time began to be fulfilled; for about the third year after our LORD's death, Herod Antipas engaged in a war with Aretas king of Arabia Petræa, in which he was vanquished. After this the Jews had a variety of intestine divisions, and many contests with the neighbouring states, in which great numbers of them were slain. Sometimes they were terrified with *rumours of wars*, which after putting them in great fear, came to nothing. They were frequently exposed, on account of their turbulent conduct, to the resentment of the Romans, who attacked them in all places; by which that part of our LORD's prophecy was fulfilled, *wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* The Jewish nation was compared to a dead carcass, and the Romans to eagles, birds of prey, that feed on dead carcasses. There was a peculiar propriety in the comparison, as the Roman standard was an eagle.

* See p. 313.

Our LORD foretold, that there would be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes. History informs us, that there were some very remarkable ones between the time of the prediction and the destruction of Jerusalem, by which many of the Jews died. Our LORD also predicted, that there would be fearful signs in the heavens; and both the Jewish historian Josephus, and Tacitus, a Roman historian of great credit, relate, that there were wonderful prodigies observed before the taking of the city. But these, our LORD informed his disciples, were only the *beginnings* of sorrows, for the *end* was not yet.

Having foretold what distresses would happen to the Jews, our LORD acquainted his disciples, that though they would not share the above calamities with the Jews, they would not be exempt from sufferings, and informed them what they were to expect.

We have read the completion of these predictions in the history of the Apostles, and in what manner their persecutions proved testimonies to the truth of their doctrine, &c. There were, besides what are mentioned in the Acts, some dreadful persecutions of the Christians under the emperor Nero, in which St. Peter and St. Paul (as has been related) lost their lives. At that time, if a man was possessed of every human virtue, it was crime enough if he were a Christian; so true were our SAVIOUR's words, that his followers should be hated of all nations for his name's sake.

Our LORD also predicted, that there would be *apostates* and *traitors* among their *own brethren*; and that many would fall off from their faith, on account of persecution. Of this there are some instances recorded by St. Paul in his second Epistle to Timothy; and Tacitus relates, that a multitude of Christians were convicted and executed through

through the information of others, who were intimidated by the dangers which threatened them.

That the disciples might not apprehend from these misfortunes, that *all* the followers of CHRIST should be cut off, he assured them, that whoever should to the last, without fear or shame, profess faith in him and love to the brethren, should be *saved*. This promise had a double reference, first to *eternal salvation* in heaven (the certain portion of those who died martyrs), and also to a signal act of Providence at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, by which the Christians were preserved from that dreadful calamity.

Our LORD foretold, that before the total end of the Jewish state, his Gospel should be preached in all the world, in order that all nations might be convinced, that the Jews deserved those heavy judgments which were inflicted upon them, for crucifying the LORD of glory.

The short account lately given of the travels of the Apostles shews, that the Gospel *was* preached in all parts of the known world, and that it gained ground even in the most considerable parts of the Roman empire. One of the first Christian writers, who was a contemporary and fellow-labourer with St. Paul, says of *him* in particular, "that he was a preacher both in the east and in the west; that he taught the whole world righteousness, and travelled as far as the utmost borders of the west."

And if such were the labours of *one* Apostle, what must have been the united labours of them all! It appears, indeed, from the writers of the history of the church, that before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Gospel was not only preached in the Lesser Asia, Greece, and Italy, but was likewise propagated as far northward as Scythia, as far southward as Ethiopia, as far eastward as Parthia and India, and as far westward as Spain and Britain.

Our LORD having described the signs which were to be the *forerunners* of the destruction of Jerusalem, mentioned a circumstance which they were to regard as a token, that this great event was *just at hand*; namely, *the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place*. This prediction has been variously applied by commentators, but our LORD certainly knew its true import; and we find, that the *abomination of desolation* signified a heathen army *besieging* the HOLY CITY. The Roman army is called the *abomination* for its ensigns and images, which were so to the Jews; and the *abomination of desolation*, as it was to desolate and lay waste JERUSALEM. The *Holy Place* meant the city, and a certain compass of ground around it.

Our LORD warned all who consulted their own safety to flee unto the mountains, which they had opportunities of doing. He counselled them to flee as precipitately as possible, and if they were on the house-top not to come down. The houses of the Jews were flat on the top for them to walk upon, and had usually stairs on the outside, by which they might ascend and descend without coming into the house. These flat-roofed houses usually formed terraces from one end of the city to the other, which terraces terminated in gates; therefore those who were walking on them, might easily pursue their course along the tops of the houses, and escape out of the city-gate.

It is very easy to perceive, why our LORD pronounced wo to those who were with child or had young infants, as they could not make so hasty a flight as others, nor so well endure the miseries of famine, and the other hardships of a siege. The reason why they should pray that their flight might not be in the winter is also obvious, as the hardness of the season, the badness of the roads, and the shortness of the days, would be great impediments

ments to a speedy flight. Travelling on the sabbath-day would also have exposed the Christians to the resentment of the Jews.

SECTION LXXXIII.

THE FULFILMENT OF OUR BLESSED LORD'S PREDICTION.

As our SAVIOUR cautioned his disciples to fly when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, it was providentially ordered, that though Jerusalem would be encompassed with armies, yet they should have opportunities afforded them of making their escape.

There had for a considerable time been dreadful distractions in Judea, which occasioned great slaughter. In each province multitudes had lost their lives, and many of the principal cities had been destroyed. The Romans, under pretence of chastising the Jews for sedition, committed hostilities against them, took possession of their fortresses, wasted and plundered the country, and put numbers of them to the sword.

Vespasian having been made governor of Judea by the emperor Nero, and employed to carry on the wars against the Jews, made great ravages in Judea; and having subdued all the country, prepared to besiege Jerusalem, and invested the city on every side: but Nero's death, and the disturbances which ensued in the Roman empire, diverted the attention of Vespasian from his purpose, and he did not proceed to besiege Jerusalem in form. These incidental delays were very favourable to the Christians; and it is supposed that many retired

from the city, in obedience to their LORD's admonitions. The Jews were at this time divided into parties and factions among themselves, and destroyed each other, so that a lake of blood ran in the sacred courts of the Temple ; and so great was the rage of party, that in order to distress their opponents they burnt houses full of provisions, as if they studiously co-operated with the Romans to cut off their own strength. Many wished for the impending foreign war to free them from their domestic evils. The Jews were filled with fear and astonishment ; there was no time for counsel, no hope of pacification, no means of flight. A ceaseless cry of combatants was heard night and day, and the lamentation of mourners was still more dreadful. Relations shewed no reverence for the living, nor solicitude to bury them when dead. The seditious parties fought treading on heaps of slain, and were continually inventing cruel methods of destruction.

Great revolutions happened in the Roman state during this period ; at length Vespasian was made emperor, who sent his son Titus with a select army against Jerusalem. When he arrived, the Jews were in the situation above described. Titus surrounded the city with encampments ; the sight of his army reconciled the Jews to each other, and united them against so formidable an enemy. Our LORD predicted that the enemies of Jerusalem should cast a trench about her, and compass her round, and keep her in on every side. This was literally fulfilled ; for Titus, discouraged and exasperated by the repeated destruction of his engines and towers, undertook the arduous task of enclosing the city with a wall ; which, though it included a circuit of five miles, was completed by the vigilance of his soldiers in three days. By this means all hope of succours was cut off

off from the Jews, no provision could be carried into the city, no person could come out unknown to the enemy.

Our LORD foretold, that the destruction of Jerusalem should be attended with greater distress than had ever been known before, from the beginning of the world. And history informs us, that the calamities and miseries of the Jews during the siege were beyond parallel. Rapine and murder, famine and pestilence within; fire and sword, and all the terrors of war without. These calamities were so severe, that had they continued, they must have consumed the whole Jewish nation; but God so ordered the course of his providence, that these dreadful days were shortened. Titus, desirous to put a speedy end to the siege, that he might return to Rome, resolved to proceed with the utmost vigour; and the Jews, by burning their provisions and deserting their strong holds, had so weakened themselves, that they were not able to resist such measures, which were, as our LORD foretold, *sudden and unexpected*.

So great was the number of dead bodies thrown over the walls, that Titus raised up his hands to heaven, and called God to witness, that this extreme misery arose from themselves, and not him; yet the Jewish soldiers marched against the Romans over heaps of their own dead, without horror or commiseration.

And now the Romans advanced their last engines against the walls. The besieged made a vigorous defence, though the famine was so severe, that the soldiers were compelled to eat their belts, their shoes, the skins of their shields, and dried grass.

Titus and his army, however, entered the city, and assaulted the Temple itself. As his battering-rams made no impression on it, he ordered that the gates should be burnt; and the fire soon spread to the adjoining porti-

coes. He had resolved in council to preserve the Temple entire, as a monument of honour to himself, and therefore commanded his soldiers to extinguish the fire; but God had condemned it to the flames: and one of the soldiers unmindful of the command of his general, as if urged by Divine impulse, seized some of the burning materials, and with the assistance of another soldier, who raised him from the ground, threw it into the golden window of the Temple towards the north. And notwithstanding Titus ordered his soldiers to stop the progress of the flames they pretended not to hear him, and exhorted the foremost ranks to spread the conflagration. A dreadful scene ensued. The Roman soldiers to gratify their hatred of the Jews, dealt death and slaughter on all who came in their way. Thousands of men, women, and children, were burnt. Multitudes, half dead before with famine, perished by the sword, and the ground could not be seen for carcases. Titus then held a conference with the Jewish rulers, who required to be dismissed into the desert with their wives and children, having sworn not to resign up their persons to him. Titus, enraged that they should prescribe conditions to their conqueror, delivered them up to the fury of the soldiers, who burnt a great part of the city, of which they were in possession. The Jews still refused to submit, and retired to the higher city, where they behaved like savages. Here the Romans attacked them, and made a breach in their walls. They were then seized with sudden fear, and quitting towers impregnable to any force, betook themselves to subterraneous passages. By thus going into the holes of rocks and into the caves of the earth, they expressed the greatest consternation, and in effect said to the mountains, "Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us." The
Romans

Romans stood amazed at their victory. So many Jews were slain, that the whole city was drenched with blood. In the evening the slaughter ended, and the flames increased. When Titus viewed the strength of their fortifications, he made use of these words, "We have fought with the assistance of God. It was God who drove the Jews out of their forts: for what could the hands of men or the force of machines effect against these towers?" And when he had utterly destroyed the city, he left those towers as a monument of that fortune which confederated with him.

After this, Titus gave orders that the seditious should be put to death; but the tallest and most beautiful youths were reserved for Cæsar's triumph. The rest of the multitude, above 17 years of age, were sent to the works in Egypt, or as presents through the provinces, to perish by the sword, and by wild beasts in the theatres. Those under the age of seventeen were sold—11,000 perished by famine. The number of all the captives taken throughout the war was 97,000; and of those who were destroyed through the whole siege, were 1,100,000, and the greatest part of these were from different countries; for they came from every quarter to the passover, and were suddenly shut up by the war.

Our LORD predicted, that *so the lightning cometh from the east, and shineth also unto the west, so should the coming of the Son of man be*; and it is said, that the destruction of Jerusalem began in the east, and went on westward.

The Romans having completed their conquest, burnt the extremities of the city, and dug up the walls, leaving nothing standing but some of the highest towers and a part of the wall; for the pioneers so effectually levelled the remainder of the city to the ground, as not to leave those who approached it any proof that it had ever been inhabited.

inhabited. Thus were our LORD's prophecies fulfilled, *Thine enemies shall lay thee even with the ground, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another*; and what is remarkable, the destruction of the temple happened on the same day of the year in which Nebuchadnezzar burnt the first Temple.

Our LORD assured his disciples, that *not a hair of their head should perish*; and history informs us, that not one Christian was involved in the destruction of Jerusalem: therefore, his promise certainly alluded to that time, and not to the persecutions they were both before and afterwards to endure for the sake of the Gospel.

Our LORD foretold, that *the Jews should not only fall by the edge of the sword, but that many should be led away captive into all nations*. They have been successively in subjection to the Romans, the Saracens, &c. and have never possessed their city since its overthrow by Titus, but still remain dispersed among all nations, and yet a distinct people.

Our LORD predicted, that *Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*. The first who attempted to rebuild Jerusalem was the Roman emperor Ælius Adrian, 47 years after its destruction by Titus. He called the city he built Ælia, and placed a Roman colony in it. The Jews upon this occasion rebelled, and through the neglect of the Romans gained possession of it; but it was again besieged by the Romans, and burnt to the ground. There was a dreadful slaughter of the Jews at this time; and of those who survived, an incredible number of every age and sex, were sold like horses, and dispersed over the face of the earth. The emperor rebuilt the city, peopled it as before, and caused a statute of a hog in marble to be placed over the gate that opened towards Bethlehem; and published an edict, forbidding any Jew upon pain of death to enter into it, or so much as to look upon it at a distance.

In

In this state Jerusalem continued till the reign of the first Christian emperor, Constantine the Great. Its ancient name was almost totally forgotten amongst the heathens; but in Constantine's time it was once more called Jerusalem, and the emperor adorned it with many stately edifices. The Jews again assembled to recover their city, and rebuild their temple; but Constantine, who was very severe against them, repressed them, and caused their ears to be cut off, and their bodies marked for rebels, and dispersed them over all the provinces of his empire as slaves. But Julian, the succeeding emperor, called the Apostate, was more favourably inclined to them from his prejudice against the Christians; and in order to defeat our LORD's prophecy, he resolved to re-establish the Jewish religion, and join with them in worship. He assured the Jews of his protection and assistance, and even assigned great sums for the building of the Temple; and gave it in charge to Alypius one of his lieutenants, who set about it vigorously; the governor of the province also assisted. But horrible balls of fire frequently bursting forth near the foundation, rendered the place inaccessible to the workmen, who were repeatedly burnt, and the enterprize was laid aside. This account is attested both by Christian and heathen writers.

The succeeding emperors were in general enemies to the Jews, and after various revolutions Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Turks, who still possess it under the title of Protectors, though they are more properly tyrants and oppressors. Turks, Arabians, and Christians of various sects, dwell there out of reverence to the place, but very few Jews, and of those the greatest part are beggars, and live upon alms.

For nearly 1800 years the Jewish nation has been a
T 5
standing

standing monument of the truth of our SAVIOUR's predictions; and there is no doubt but they will continue in the same state, nor ever recover their native country, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. The *times of the Gentiles* will be *fulfilled*, when all Gentile nations are either converted to Christianity, or condemned to destruction for rejecting it. Then will the Jews acknowledge their MESSIAH, and again be restored to their land; and so all Israel shall be saved, and become with the Gentiles the people of God. There are a number of predictions scattered through the prophetic writings, which seem clearly to point out a future restoration of the Jews; but as these do not immediately concern us as Christians, we will at present pass them by.

The predictions in the latter part of this section related first to the destruction of Jerusalem, and as far as they alluded to that they were *figurative*; but the destruction of Jerusalem was a *type* of the *end of the world*, therefore these prophecies may be understood in their *literal* sense, as referring to the *great and terrible day of the LORD*, the *day of Judgment*. Our LORD's predictions agreed with those of the ancient prophets, but were more particular and circumstantial.

Our LORD foretold, that these things should happen *immediately after* the tribulations which he predicted would fall on the Jews; from which it is supposed that he meant to include *all* the tribulations they should endure till the time of their restoration; and by his saying they should be fulfilled before *that generation* passed away, is understood, not only that some of the race of men who were then alive would see the destruction of Jerusalem, but that the *end of the world* should happen before the *generation or nation* of the Jews was extinct.

The *Elect* is a common term in scripture for Christians;

tians ; therefore we may understand, that the days of extraordinary tribulation were through God's providence, *shortened*, for the sake of the *Christian Jews* of those times ; and also for the sake of such as God by his *omniscience* knew *would* embrace Christianity. Had that generation of Jews, who were involved in the destruction of Jerusalem, been *totally cut off*, many who have since been sincere followers of their MESSIAH, and thus entitled to everlasting happiness in his kingdom, would never have been born*.

In the destruction of Jerusalem we have a memorable and awful instance of God's vengeance against a wicked *nation*. The SUPREME BEING, by inflicting these heavy punishments on his *chosen people*, has shewn that he is not partial in his dealings. This consideration ought to be a warning to Christians, especially at a time when God's judgments are evidently abroad in the world. If we compare the present state of our own nation with that of the Jews, we may perceive resemblance enough to fill us with apprehension. The Gospel, in which all the goodness and mercy of God through CHRIST are displayed—in which the aid and comfort of the HOLY SPIRIT are offered to all who will diligently seek them—in which all the hopes and fears of eternity are exhibited, to guard us against the temptations of sin, is not only rejected by many, but treated with a malicious scorn, and all our hopes and fears in CHRIST represented as delusions and impositions upon the weakness of men. The vices and immoralities for which our

* For a more *circumstantial* account of the events by which these prophecies of our LORD were fulfilled, I must refer my readers to the works from which I have extracted, viz. Bishop Newcome's *Observations on our LORD's Conduct*, chap. iii. Bishop Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, Vol. ii. Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*.

LORD so severely reprov'd the Jews, are likewise notoriously practised among us. The *beginning of sorrows*, wars, rumours of wars, famines, earthquakes, and pestilences, sent to punish some and call others to repentance, are abroad in the world, but by too many regarded with a careless eye, or imputed to mere natural causes. But let us from these *terrors of the LORD* learn *righteousness*. Let us do our part towards completing the national reformation, which is so happily begun among us. Let us glory in our Christian profession, and implore our merciful GOD, for the sake of his *faithful* people, to save this guilty land; and grant those who slight their blessed Redeemer, a farther time for repentance and amendment!

Let us now see what has been revealed to us concerning the fate of good and bad people in the *world to come*.

SECTION LXXXIV.

VISIONS WHICH ARE UNDERSTOOD TO BE PREDICTIVE OF THE END OF THE WORLD, AND THE FUTURE STATE OF GOOD AND BAD PEOPLE.

From the Revelation of St. John.

I. I saw a mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

And he had in his hand a little book open, and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth; and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and he lifted up his hand to heaven,

And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created

created heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the things that are therein, that there should be time no longer.

But that the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

II. I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

III. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

IV. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, Blessed are they, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.

V. And I beheld—and lo there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their place.

And

And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains :

And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb :

For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand.

VI. I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself.

And he was clothed in a vesture dipt in blood: and his name is called the WORD OF GOD.

And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen white and clean.

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

VII. I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death

death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

VIII. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the Holy City (New Jerusalem) coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

And he that sate upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful.

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

IX. And I beheld, and lo a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people,

people, and tongues, stood before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders *, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God,

Saying, Amen : blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

And one of the elders said unto me. What are these that are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ?

And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb :

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him night and day in the Temple ; and he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell amongst them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

X. And there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the LORD, and of his CHRIST, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God,

Saying, We give thee thanks, O LORD God Almighty,

* See Sect. liii.

who art, and wast, and art to come : because thou hast taken unto thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

XI. I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Allelujah ; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the LORD our GOD :

For true and righteous are his judgments.—And again they said, Allelujah.

And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down before the throne, and worshipped God, who sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Allelujah.

And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him both small and great.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah ; for the LORD God Omnipotent reigneth.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him ; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white ; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

And an angel said unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, These are the true sayings of GOD.

And I fell at his feet to worship him : and he said unto me, See thou do it not : I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus ; worship God : for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

XII. And the LORD God of the holy prophets sent his angel, to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done, and to say,

Behold,

Behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book—Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.

Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates to the New Jerusalem.

I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him which is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely.

Amen. Even so, come LORD JESUS!

The grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST be with us all. Amen.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This Section is composed from the Revelations of St. John. “In this mysterious book of scripture many revolutions are foretold, which were to take place in the church of God*. They are not indeed so foretold as to afford a clear and precise information concerning the time of their coming to pass—it would have been, on many accounts, improper to have lifted up too far that awful veil which covers futurity. The intention of the HOLY SPIRIT was not to gratify the curiosity of the *learned*, but to satisfy the *serious* concerning the

* See Dr. Blair's Sermon on the Happiness of a Future State, in Vol. ii.

general plan of Providence, and final issue of the divine government. Amidst those distresses which befel Christians during the first ages, the discoveries made in this book were peculiarly seasonable, as they shewed that there was an Almighty Guardian, who watched with particular attention over the interests of the church which he had formed, who foresaw all the commotions which were to happen among the kingdoms of the earth, and would so over-rule them, as to promote in the end the cause of truth. This is the chief scope of those mystic visions, with which the Apostle John was favoured."

From the first of these extracts we learn, that the consummation of all things will certainly come, for the Almighty has determined it; TIME will cease to be numbered by days, weeks, months, and years, by the revolutions of the heavenly luminaries, and will be absorbed in an unmeasurable ETERNITY. Then the great mystery of God's providence, in suffering vice and confusion to prevail so much in the world, which has been partly made known to us by the prophets, will be fully cleared.

From the 2d we learn, that God distinguishes as his *own* all his faithful servants; and *when he sendeth judgments to destroy the wicked, he has a regard to THEIR safety and comfort.*

The 3d intimates, that the Gospel will be preached to all nations before the end of the world *.

By the 4th we are assured, that good people, immediately after their decease, are in a state of bliss; and that their works of piety and goodness will follow them into the presence of God, and will, through his infinite mercy, be recompensed with eternal glory.

The 5th may be considered by us as an emblem of the DAY OF JUDGMENT. It affords a lively image of that

* See Sect. liii.

awful event, and of the general consternation which will seize upon all who are conscious of deserving the anger of their GOD and SAVIOUR.

6th. The person who was represented to the Apostle's imagination upon a *white horse*, was undoubtedly the same whom he had before seen as the LORD *. He is here described *as crowned with many crowns*, in token of his universal dominion. The name was written on them, of which no man but himself knew the full import, was, as we afterwards read, the WORD of GOD. This circumstance implies, that there are *mysteries* in his nature beyond the comprehension of *human reason*. But by this name men may honour and worship him, and he may also be addressed as KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS, since he has dominion over all the kings and princes of the earth, and all the powers of heaven. The *sword in his mouth* is an emblem of his *doctrine*, and the *rod of iron* signifies that he is the *executor* of the *divine wrath*. The *armies of heaven which followed him* denote his *faithful servants*, their *white garments* denote their *innocence and purity*.

7th. The white throne is a representation of the judgment-seat of CHRIST; the general collection of the dead from the earth, the sea, death, and hell, implies, that the resurrection will be universal. What becomes of the souls of men while they are in a state of separation from their bodies, is not particularly revealed to us; neither is it essential to our salvation to know. It is most agreeable to our idea of their spiritual nature to suppose, that from the time of their departure, they are *happy or miserable*, according to the lives men have led on earth; and the scripture intimates, that they are re-

* See Sect. liii.

served for a still greater portion of happiness or misery, to which they will be consigned when they are again united to their bodies. The wicked will then be *plunged* into an abyss of inconceivable and eternal ruin and torment, while the good will follow their blessed Redeemer to those happy regions which, in condescension to the faculties of the human mind, are in the next extract described as a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, in the midst of which God will pitch his tabernacle.

8th. In order to shew, that the Almighty would manifest his *glorious presence*, and *renew all things* in the *person* of his ETERNAL WORD, the vision describes *him* who sate* on the throne, as declaring with the utmost solemnity, that HE would make all things new; and, that the Apostle might know him to be the same Divine Being whom he saw in a former vision, he assured him that he was ALPHA and OMEGA, the beginning and the end; that is, HE who had existed with the FATHER from all eternity, and who should remain for endless ages unchangeably the same.

How comfortable is our LORD's gracious promise to those who thirst after immortal happiness, and overcome the temptations of the world! How awful his threatenings to obstinate sinners!

9th. What a beautiful picture was presented to the imagination of the Apostle, of the happiness of the Saints in heaven†! "A multitude, consisting of all the *wise*, the *holy*, and the *just* of all nations, ranks, and conditions, joined in one blessed society, each happy in himself, and participating in the felicity of the rest."

* See Dr. Blair's Sermons, Vol. ii.

† Ibid.

“ *All that is meant by the white robes and palms, we cannot at present understand ; but as they are used among all nations as ensigns of joy and victory, they are undoubtedly employed here, to represent that distinguished felicity and honour to which human nature shall be then advanced.*”

By the answer of the Elder we may understand, that there is a state of rest and repose for all who shall patiently endure tribulation, provided they have “ *washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ;*” that is, have had recourse to the means of grace. “ From that blood which was shed for the remission of sins, flow both the atonement of human guilt, and the regeneration of human nature. Human nature had fallen too low to be capable of raising itself ; it could not regain its primitive innocence, and was still less capable of raising itself so high as to mingle with Angels. Heaven must either have been covered from our view by perpetual darkness, or only beheld from afar as an inaccessible region, if CHRIST had not interposed ; but now it is open to all who will embrace his Gospel, and faithfully adhere to him.”

We further learn from this vision, “ that the manifestation of the Divine presence shall be a signal for the renovation of all things ; when that Sun of Righteousness shall break forth from the cloud which now conceals him, *sorrow and sin, and every evil thing* shall flee before the brightness of his face : for neither *guilt nor misery* can remain where God dwells.”

10th. This vision intimates, that the triumph of Omnipotence in the establishment of CHRIST’s kingdom in heaven, according to his eternal purpose, will excite in the whole church of God (represented here by Elders) the profoundest veneration and gratitude.

11th. This

11th. This song of triumph is here inserted, because it is a pattern for our own adoration, being suited not only to the *angelic host*, but to the *faithful upon earth*. Besides, it teaches us to worship HIM *who sat upon the throne, as God*. The voice from the throne we may consider as that of *our blessed Redeemer*, who, as *Mediator*, excites men, by his Gospel and the HOLY SPIRIT, to offer those praises which are through him transmitted to the FATHER. What magnificent ideas are raised in our mind, from the description that follows! an *innumerable multitude* joining with one voice in the most exalted praise and thanksgiving, and exulting with holy transport and joy for the *marriage of the Lamb*. By the *marriage of the Lamb* is meant, the reception of the faithful into the *heavenly kingdom* of the MESSIAH. The *fine linen*, which is here called the *righteousness of the Saints*, we may understand from a former passage, was not *clean by nature*, but *washed in the blood of the Lamb*. The *marriage-supper of the Lamb*, is the felicity prepared in heaven for all who will obey the invitation of the Gospel.

From the Angel's forbidding John to worship him, we learn, that no *created* being is a proper object of *adoration*: it would be an act of *idolatry* to pay that kind of worship to the MESSIAH which the Scriptures suggest to us, unless we had a regard to his union with the FATHER. The Angel on this occasion called himself *low-servant* to the Apostle, and *one of his brethren*, because he spake by the *spirit of prophecy*, and was, like other prophets, employed to *bear testimony* of things relating to the MESSIAH: the *spirit of prophecy* is called the *testimony of Jesus*, because all the prophecies, from the very beginning, have a reference to the dispensation of God's grace through him: they first
testified

testified to the world, that God *would* send the MESSIAH, and served afterwards as *witnesses* to prove JESUS to be *He*.

12th. We are here called upon, in the most solemn manner, to observe the contents of the *Book of Revelations*; the *reason* why they claim our particular attention we may gather from the 11th extract—because they are *the true words of God*, which shall as surely be fulfilled, as the Prophecies of the *Old Testament* have been in relation to our blessed LORD's life and ministry on earth.—They are, indeed, in many respects at present obscure, but there are satisfactory explications * of various parts of them, written by learned authors, which, by those who have made themselves well acquainted with such parts of Scripture as relate to *Faith* and *Practice*, may be read with pleasure and advantage; for the *Revelations* are not given to us as a *sealed* book, which it is *sinful to pry into*, but as a repository of prophecies, which will become gradually intelligible, as the events to which they refer take place. *The time* for the completion of some of them *was at hand* when they were first revealed to St. John, and the same may continue to be said by others, till they are all fully completed. And in respect to our LORD's *second* coming, though many years and ages may revolve before *the end of the world*, yet, in one sense, he will *quickly come* to each individual of the successive generations of mankind; *death* soon puts a period to our *state of probation*; after which no opportunities will be afforded us of reforming what has been amiss. If we have polluted our minds with *presumptuous sins*, we shall then have no means of purifying them: if we are clothed with the righteousness

* Particularly Bishop Hurd.

of the Gospel, we shall then be in no danger of contracting guilt, but shall be eternally recompensed according to our works *here*; for we shall be judged by an equitable and unerring Judge, even the great ALPHA and OMEGA, the WORD OF GOD, the BRIGHTNESS OF HIS FATHER'S GLORY, by whom David himself was created, and who as the promised MESSIAH, was, according to his *human nature*, the *offspring* of David. Happy will those be who properly prepare themselves for his important appearance. * “ May the grateful remembrance of our Redeemer's love, and faith in his promises, animate us to follow his blessed example to the utmost of our abilities, that we may be able to say with the Holy Apostle, AMEN! *Even so, come LORD JESUS!* Hasten the blessed hour to us, and all thy faithful people, as far as is consistent with the counsels of eternal wisdom; and in the mean time grant us the assistance of thy Grace, to keep alive the remembrance of thy love, and the expectation of thy coming in our hearts; and so animate us to a temper and conduct which may suit the blessings we have received, and the nobler felicity after which thou hast taught us to aspire! AMEN! and AMEN!”

SECTION LXXXV.

THE CONCLUSION.

We have now taken a view of Sacred History from the creation of the world to the consummation of all things; and are, by the perusal of the New Testament, put into the method of understanding as much of the *nature* of the SUPREME BEING, and the dispensations of his Providence, as GOD has thought proper to reveal.

* Doddridge.

We find that there are *three* by whom the attributes of the Divine nature are displayed, the FATHER, the WORD (or SON), and the HOLY SPIRIT: that these are not three *separate* Deities, but all included in GOD. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST commanded his Disciples to *baptize* all nations *in the name of the* FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST; from whence we may infer, that we are also to *distinguish* each, and at the same time to *unite* them in our *worship* of the DEITY, in order to keep alive in our minds the remembrance of GOD's gracious dispensations towards us. When we consider GOD as *an universal* PARENT, our reverence, gratitude, and love, are strongly excited—when we reflect on His wonderful condescension as the REDEEMER *of the world*, these sentiments are enlarged, and we have at the same time an opportunity of honouring the MESSIAH; and when we contemplate GOD as a *spiritual guide and comforter*, ever at hand to direct us in the path of immortal happiness, we are struck with the sense of a *present* DEITY, to whom our most secret thoughts and inclinations are known, and are encouraged to put our trust and confidence in Him. We see, then, that distinguishing the FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, in our worship of GOD, has a natural tendency to excite proper sentiments of devotion in our hearts, by reminding us of the blessings of *creation, preservation, redemption, and sanctification*; and that this mode of worship is *suitable* to the *method* in which it has pleased GOD to reveal himself to us.

In what *manner* the DIVINE THREE make *one* GOD cannot be explained; but since our *reason* assures us that the *Scriptures* are of *Divine original*, and *they* declare that the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST, are
one,

one *, we should believe it to be so, on *their authority*; besides, each, *separately* considered, bears such evident *marks* of *Divinity*, that it is inconsistent with *common sense* not to allow it Him, and it is not *possible* that there can be more than *one* GOD; therefore the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY SPIRIT, must be *included* in the SUPREME BEING.

The *Epistles*, which were written by some of the Apostles to the different churches which they established, are a supplement to the spiritual instructions given by our LORD to his Disciples while on earth; these throw great light on the doctrines inculcated in these volumes. Whatever portion of Scripture we make the subject of our meditations, we should always remember, that an *humble and teachable mind* is an indispensable qualification, *with* which we may expect *the aid of the* HOLY SPIRIT in understanding it; *without* which, we shall soon be involved in a labyrinth of doubt and perplexity †. “After the most laborious researches of the most enlarged minds, many things will remain *mysterious*. The *nature and attributes* of GOD—the nature of Angels—of the human mind—of the state of departed souls—of the joys of heaven, and the pains of hell, our understanding cannot comprehend, neither is such knowledge necessary for our salvation—we *know* enough to be *saved*, if we will live accordingly.

“Several reasons may be assigned why many things should remain *mysterious* in *this* world. *Mysteries* are necessary for the exercise of our *faith*; they have a natural tendency to excite religious awe and reverence, to humble the *pride of human reason*, and make *that* the mean of *life*, the very reverse of which was the mean of

* 1 Epistle of St. John, chap. v. ver. 7.

† See Bishop Newton's *Dissertations*, Vol. III.

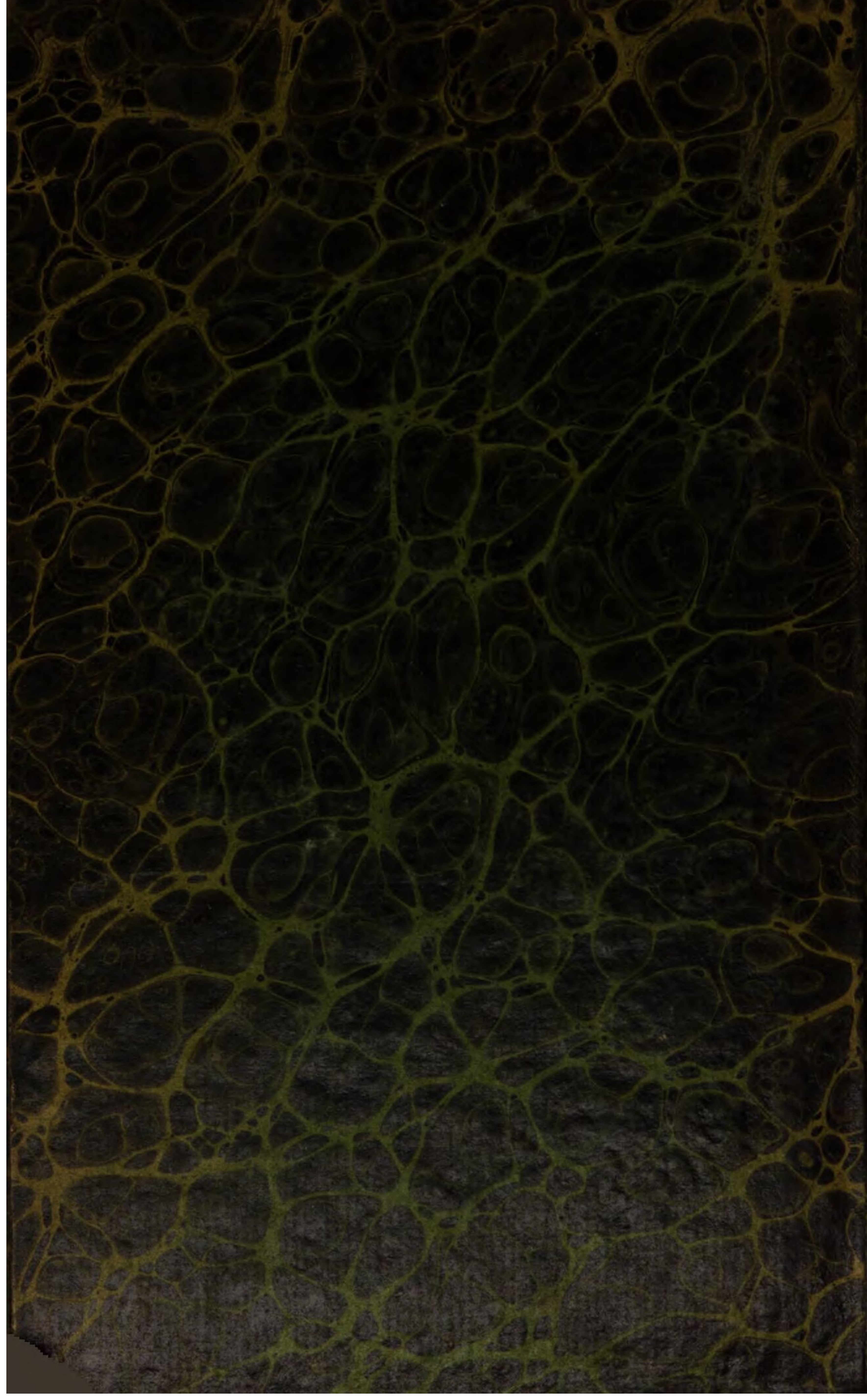
death. Man fell by *pride* through a sense of his *knowledge*; he is restored by *humility* through a sense of his *ignorance.* There is in the Scriptures light enough to enlighten believers, and obscurity enough to try them."

"The fuller comprehension of mysteries will make a part of our happiness in the world to come. At present we are at a vast distance from GOD and CHRIST, but in the next world we shall be near—we here converse with *men*, but in heaven we shall converse with *Angels.* The *earthly* BODY now presses down the *SOUL*, but after the *resurrection* we shall have *spiritual* bodies—we now walk by *faith*, but shall then walk by *sight.*"

Let us then, from those truths we cannot *comprehend*, learn to reverence the Divine Author of them; and if we are desirous of knowing more of *spiritual things* than the *Scriptures* teach us, let us endeavour to live so as to secure an inheritance in the blessed REGIONS OF ETERNITY.

FINIS.

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